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EDITORIAL

BY HAL SCHUSTER

TALENT DESERVES RECOGNITION

I am really pretty unhappy with some of you readers out there. COMICS FEATURE has sold very well, every issue except one, since we've been out there in the wide world. That is what makes me a bit unhappy, even though I am certain that the issue you are now reading will outsell almost all of the others. You might ask, if we have such a winner, why am I not happy?

Well, let me tell you. The one issue which didn't sell well was the September COMICS FEATURE. It was the only issue that didn't feature superheroes on the cover. The cover was of Conan, and the issue showcased an interview with one of the greatest talents ever to produce comic books—John Buscema. John drew the fantastic Silver Surfer in his own series, is the talent who has produced virtually every major title at Marvel Comics at one time or another, and a man who has been totally ignored by comic book fandom. He deserves serious attention and we gave it to him, printing one of his very fine barbarian paintings on our cover. All of you ignored the issue, skipping it and going on to the next one . . . or certainly the one after that. To me, that indicates a very limited range of taste on your part, and that makes me sad. But I have also learned my lesson.

In secondary features or in columns we will continue to try to expose you to the different and the excellent as well as the familiar, but never again in the feature piece or as the main cover visual. While this means we will not be able to give these works the attention that they deserve, we are certainly willing to bend to the voice of the majority.

Two issues ago we focused on Stan Lee and Marvel Animation, last issue it was the mutants in the Marvel Universe and this time around it is an exclusive special report on the second series of Marvel Secret Wars. Next issue we hope to zoom in on the whole group of new titles upcoming from Marvel Comics and the issue after that we will take a look at everyone's favorite Web-slinger.

Also, since last issue and from now on, our Consumer's Guide feature brings all of the latest comic book wares to your attention. An important special report on the newest and the hottest, coupled with the Consumer's Guide, Feature News, Strip Search, Animated Antics, Heroes, Golden Age, Silver Age, Games and lots of other surprises should add up to a pretty good mag. It almost makes it worth putting up with Publisher's Picks, doesn't it?

The conclusion of our Cartoonists on Campus piece didn't make it into this issue due to space shortage caused by the extra length of some of the columns this time. Rather than truncate a good piece unduly, we put the wrap-up off till next time.

One last thing: Can anyone out there write a letter? We apparently have tons of readers who I assume are enjoying this book, but I'm never really sure. We just don't get any letters telling us how you feel, whether you're happy with what we are doing (although I suppose you wouldn't spend your money on us if you were too unhappy!) and what you like most or would like changed. I am an editor who likes to communicate with and listen to his readers. You have a genuine opportunity to shape what appears in COMICS FEATURE, but only if you speak out. So send some letters, hear?

FEATURE NEWS

Marvel cancels six, Heads for Ethiopia

Marvel Comics Steve Saffel announced today that six titles have been cancelled. He stated that "the last issues of the titles are the following: **Rom** with 75, **Defenders** with 152, **Dazzler** with42, **Micronauts** with 20, **Thing** with 36 and **Powerman/Iron Fist** with 125. All of these issues will be doubles. All storylines will be completed."

He went on to announce a special comic book being done to benefit the people of Ethiopia. "There is a special comic featuring the X-Men that all profits are being given to benefit Ethiopia. None of the artists are being paid and Marvel is receiving no profit from it. There will be 54 creators involved in this project including Stan Lee, John Byrne, Harlan Ellison, Howie Chaykin, Mike Grell, Jim Starlin, Bernie Wrightson, Chris Claremont, Stephen King, Archie Goodwin, Denny O'Neil, Louise Simonson, Bill Mantlo, Bruce Jones, Steve Englehart, John Romita Jr., Mike Kaluta, Brett Blevins, Herb Trimpe, John Bolton, Brian Bolland, Richard Corben."

In other news **Savage Tales** has been postponed until summer and **Silver Surfer** is not on the schedule yet. Bothe the **Vision and Scarlet Witch** series by Steve Englehart and former **COMICS FEATURE** editor Richard Howell and **West Coast Avengers**, by Steve Englehart, Al Milgrom and Joe Sinnott are set for June. **The Eternals, Squadron Supreme, Longshot, The One** and **Solomon Kane** are scheduled for release in May. The Alladin Effect graphic novel offers a storyline in which the Living Monolith needs cosmic energy from the Fantastic Four and kidnaps the She Hulk. Storm, Wasp and Tigra are also involved.

One sad notes has Saffel admiting that "Star Comics are slow movers in comparison with superhero titles in comic shops, and no information is available on newsstand sales."

And meanwhile at DC...

DC has distributed one million free copies of a car safety comic book to high schools throughout the U.S. As the New York and New Jersey seat belt laws went into effect on January 1, 1985, American Honda Motor Co., Inc., and DC Comics Inc. In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation began national distribution of a 32-page comic on car safety featuring Supergirl. One million copies of the comic, as well as a kit including a teacher's guide and a poster for in-classroom display, were sent to driver education classes in 22,000 high schools around the country in mid-January. The book was prepared with the cooperation of the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Safety Belt Campaign and includes a message on the inside front cover from Elizabeth Dole, Transportation Secretary.

The comic relates the story of the serious consequences that befall a four-member family when the teenage son and younger daughter are injured in a car crash while not wearing their seat belts. As hope for the son's recovery dwindles, Supergirl risks her own life to bring him back to consciousness in the hospital. In addition to the story, the comic includes a 5-page section of questions that dispel the popular myths of seat belt use and inform readers about the facts of car safety. A separate 4-page teachers' guide to the Supergirl car safety book is also available.

"We were very pleased to have worked with American Honda on this project," commented DC Comics President and Publisher Jenette Kahn. "Car safety is such an important issue—and by reaching students in the driver education courses in high school, we can do a lot to encourage seat belt use for all drivers."

The comic was written by Joe Orlando, Barry Marx and Robert Loren Fleming; dialogued by Andy Helfer; and illustrated by Angelo Torres.

SQUADRON REACHES 50, BRUNING SIGNS ON, KIRBY DOES SUPERPOWERS

As DC Comics turns 50 years old, **All-Star Squadron**'s 50th issue will be published. The issue will tie-in with the **Crisis on Infinite Earths** maxi-series that also commemorates DC's anniversary.

"**All-Star Squadron** 50 is an important issue," noted writer/editor Roy Thomas. "We'll show the circumstances under which **Harbinger** came to Earth-2; how Commander Steel left Earth 2 for Earth-1; how Plastic Man, Blackhawk and other heroes leave Earth-2 for Earth-X how eight Justice Society members are 'shanghaied into hyperspace'; and how Johnny Quick and Liberty Belle reveal that they eloped between issues.

"And just as important as the plot changes are the artistic changes heralded with the 50th issue. Two artists will work on the book as a team. In this issue, newcomer Mike Clark will pencil ten pages and the rest will be drawn by regular artist Arvell Jones. Subsequent issues will also be shared by Clark and Jones, in different proportions depending on the story."

As of April 8, 1985 Richard Bruning joined DC Comics as Art Director, announced DC Comics Vice President-Creative Director Joe Orlando. Richard's primary concern will be with the designs of advertising and promotional material for the direct sale market. He will also be creating new formats for the DC graphic novels.

"The thought of working at DC Comics is very exciting," said Bruning upon the announcement of his new position. "My earliest memories are of reading DC Comics—I look forward to helping shape the comics that shaped me."

Bruning worked as Art Director of Capital Comics from 1981-1984; from 1983-1984, he also handled all of the design and promotion work at Capital City Distribution, Inc. He has also handled all Aardvark-Vanneheim advertising for 1¼ years, and he worked with Eclipse Comics when they were all black-&-white publications. He was most recently responsible for advertising design for a California sports magazine.

"Richard is highly recommended and touted by the people who know him," commented Joe Orlando. "I know he'll make a valuable contribution to DC comics."

A new generation will be introduced to Jack Kirby's magic with the publication of **Super Powers**, a six-issue miniseries. The series supports the popular Kenner line of Super Powers toys that debuted in 1984 with 12 characters and continues in 1985 with the introduction of 11 additional heroes and villains.

"The series includes more heroes and more villains than just about any other comic published," explains editor Andy Helfer. "And it's aimed entirely at younger readers. There's not a lot out there for that audience."

"Perhaps just as important," Helfer continues, "the series is both pencilled and inked by Jack Kirby. He's a comics veteran whose work has spanned four generations of popular comic books. I can't think of a better 'tour guide' than Jack Kirby for introducing a new generation of readers to the DC Universe."

Super Powers 1 picks up where Jack Kirby's graphic novel "Thunder Dogs" leaves off, though each story is self-contained and stands on its own. Darkseid, Lord of planet Apokolips, is plotting new ways to create a new Apokolips, since control of the current planet seems beyond his grasp. He sets his sights on a completely new locale: planet Earth. It is up to the heroes of the Earth to see that Darkseid is foiled.

The series is written by Paul Kupperberg, pencilled and inked by Jack Kirby, embellished by Greg Theakston and edited by Andy Helfer.

(CONTINUE NEWS TO PAGE 42)

Animated Antics

BY HAL SCHUSTER

For many years, Hanna-Barbera has been considered the top of the heap—the one to beat. Little has changed and Saturday Morning Animation still reflects the heavy imprint of this studio of the fantastic. With a reputation built on such blockbusters as **The Flintstones, Yogi Bear, Huckleberry Hound, Quick-Draw McGraw, The Jetsons** and loads of other household names, Hanna-Barbera still manages to surprise . . . and to be innovative within the bounds of the medium.

Hanna-Barbera is a division of Taft Entertainment (the same company that owns Ruby-Spears—the firm responsible for **Turbo Teen, Dragon's Lair, The Saturday Supercade, Alvin and the Chipmunks** and **Mr. T**), and is currently responsible for **Superfriends**, the animated home of the DC superheroes, **Gobots, The New Scooby Doo Mysteries** (and the Scary Scooby Doo

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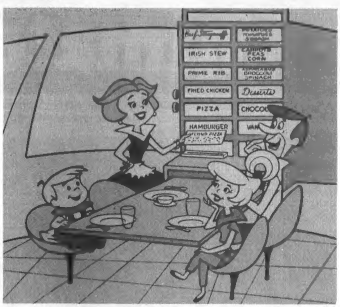

Above: Scooby Doo and Friends, the longest running characters on Saturday Morning TV.
Right: The Jetsons return and the Gobots attack in Hanna Barbera's newest productions.

nies), **Snorks, Smurfs** and repeats of **Biskitts**. Since it is the predominant force in the market, we felt it was only appropriate to cover H-B first in our series of spotlights.

GOBOTS, JETSONS AND THE FUNTASTIC WORLD OF HANNA-BARBERA

Let's begin with a look at the studio's most recent projects before returning to the more familiar current fare.

Joseph Barbera told us that two new projects will be launched very shortly. They are a block of three half-hour animated series that together form **The Funtastic World of Hanna—Barbera** (not truly Saturday morning network fare—it is aimed at the syndication market) and 41 new half-hours of **The Jetsons**, the classic future-family comedy that was first aired in 1962. The new episodes will be combined with the original 24 to form a package to be shown weekdays in syndication.

Referring to the **Funtastic World**, Barbera said, "The Sunday morning programming project is one of the most ambitious ever undertaken by our studio." He went on to say, "**The Jetsons** will retain its original cast. New stories are being written with appealing comedic characters, such as 'Orbitty,' a new member of the family who will travel in space-age vehicles.

"The technology we introduced 25 years ago to give this show its futuristic theme surrounds us today. Computers and telephones with video screens were used 25 years ago by the Jetsons. Now they are available for use in homes and offices. We are designing devices that we think will be available in the year 2000."

As every animation-lover in America is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

SILVER AGE

JULIUS SCHWARTZ — Comics with a Human Face

BY WILL JACOBS AND GERARD JONES

Ironically, in the midst of all the changes in comics during the early Sixties, it was the old, steady Julius Schwartz style that would suddenly catapult the field into a popular craze.

As experimentation swept the field, Schwartz went virtually untouched by it. His popularity continued, as did the quality of his output, and he maintained his titles on the same even course. From 1961 to 1964 his roster of comics went unchanged. But by early 1964 it was decided that something had to be done with DC's suffering Batman titles; so it was that **Strange Adventures** and **Mystery In Space**, which were less popular now that the science fiction craze was wearing thin, were shunted to Jack Schiff in order to leave Schwartz free to salvage **Batman** and **Detective Comics**.

All Schwartz had to do was to remold Batman into his own unique style. Gone were the aliens, the bizarre weapons and the weird transformations. In their place appeared neatly created tales of mystery and intrigue centering on costumed thieves and gangs of hoodlums. Fox and Broome, the new Batman writers, reinstated the Caped Crusader's flair for detection and pugilism.

In their first adventure under Schwartz, for example, Batman and Robin investigate a mysterious crime in Gotham Village, a district of Gotham City torn by controversy (**Detective** 327, May 1964). One faction wants it razed because the village is a refuge for criminals, while the other wants it preserved as a picturesque landmark. The Dynamic Duo, after some fancy detection, discover that deep under the village is buried a huge hideout for criminals, and that the brains behind the hideout is the chairman for the committee to preserve Gotham Village. As chairman, he had tried to save the village only to prevent his underground lair from being discovered.

Bob Kane remained to handle most of the art chores, altering his style in an attempt to reflect Carmine Infantino's, who drew every other issue of **Detective Comics**. The transition, however, proved too severe, for Kane's art lost all of its earlier childlike charm. Joe Giella's inks helped to bring his art

JULIUS SCHWARTZ AND FRIENDS

Artwork accompanying this column is © 1985 DC Comics, Inc.

A scene from the movie spun off of the popular Batman television show, featuring Adam West as Batman, Burt Ward as Robin, Frank Gorshin as The Riddler, Burgess Meredith as The Penguin, Cesar Romero as The Joker and Lee Meriwether as Catwoman.

closer to the Schwartz look, but it still conflicted with the pristine mold of that stable.

It was one year later that Batman, now cast completely in the Schwartz style, made an unexpected contribution to the fortunes and future of comics. TV producer William Dozier, while on an airplane flight, happened to pick up a copy of **Batman** 171 (May 1965). It featured the return of an old Batman villain, the Riddler. Fox's script abounded in puzzles, to which the Riddler had a peculiar bent, and terrible puns, for which Robin had suddenly become overly fond, all with a light tone of self-parody. Dozier immediately saw in it the possibility for a tv series.

When the **Batman** tv series premiered in January of 1966, the show became an instant hit. Dozier had exaggerated the punning and the self-parody, and overnight comic book "camp" became an instant sensation. Comic books became the subject of magazine articles, Saturday morning cartoons and a fixture on Wednesday and Thursday night television. Batman became the number one selling comic book of the year.

Weaker DC stables such as Boltinoff's, Kashdan's and Kanigher's hurled themselves wholeheartedly into the waves of camp, but Schwartz, who had inadvertently set things off, managed to get through with very few concessions. In step with the entire DC line, Schwartz's titles now sported more flamboyant and sloganladen covers, with black and white "go-go" checks across the top. In virtually every story one or another of the characters would drop the word "go-go" as an adjective and occassionally assume a hipper speech pattern, but otherwise, Schwartz's style remained the same.

Backing up Batman in **Detective Comics** now appeared the Elongated Man in his own series, written by Gardner Fox and both pencilled and inked by Carmine Infantino. Like the new Batman, the Elongated Man stories highlighted plenty of detection and pugilism, but they had a flair all their own. In every episode of this new series, Ralph Dibny and his wife Sue drove into a new town just in time to encounter a puzzling new mystery. Ralph and Sue, you see, were inveterate travellers, and the locales they visited, be they rural or tropical, were evocatively rendered by Infantino, and provided a refreshing variety to the series. The stories were light and breezy, and although limited to ten-page backup status, they immediately took their place alongside Schwartz's best titles in consistent quality.

Yvonne Craig as Batgirl.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

SECRET WARS II

Ron Goulart's exclusive report from the front!

An urgent phone call from across the country was responsible for turning me into a war correspondent. The assignment was to infiltrate Marvel Comics and learn as much as I could about the anxiously anticipated nine issue **Secret Wars II** series. Actually the job didn't involve many hazards or any hand-to-hand combat, since Marvel is always cordial to those interested in publicizing their wares. I did, however, have to brief myself before going up against some of those involved with staging this sequel to the most complex brouhaha ever seen in comics. I consulted various fanzine accounts about the original twelve issue series and then, since I hadn't followed the

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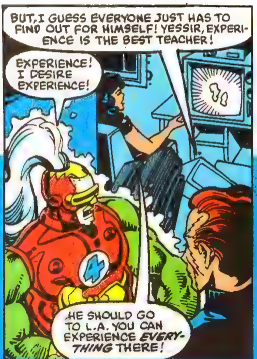
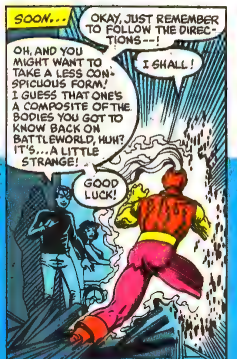
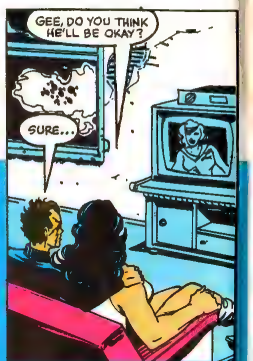

BUT, I GUESS EVERYONE JUST HAS TO FIND OUT FOR HIMSELF! YESSIR, EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER!
EXPERIENCE! I DESIRE EXPERIENCE!
HE SHOULD GO TO L.A. YOU CAN EXPERIENCE EVERYTHING THERE!


SOON...
OKAY, JUST REMEMBER TO FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS--!
I SHALL!
OH, AND YOU MIGHT WANT TO TAKE A LESS CONSPICUOUS FORM! I GUESS THAT ONE'S A COMPOSITE OF THE BODIES YOU GOT TO KNOW BACK ON BATTLEWORLD, HUH? IT'S...A LITTLE STRANGE!
GOOD LUCK!

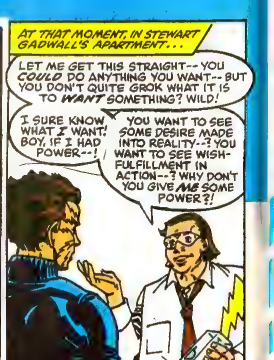


first Secret Wars as faithfully as I now realized I should've, I borrowed the entire run from our resident Marvel fanatic.

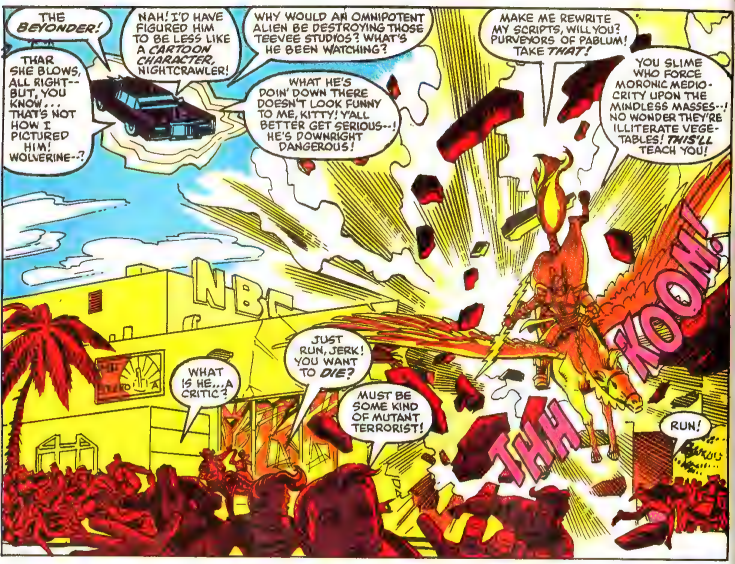
The first issue—"Can the combined might of Earth's most powerful heroes defeat the ULTIMATE menace?!!"—I felt obliged to read through several times. I hadn't realized how out of touch with the intricacies of the Marvel Universe I was. On first dipping into "The War Begins" I felt as though I'd showed up at the wrong college for my class reunion. While I recognized a fair portion of the perplexed heroes and heroines who suddenly found themselves in a strange elsewhere—I even empathized with them, since I have similar feelings upon awakening most mornings—the array of nonplussed villains didn't include many familiar faces. Furthermore I found I wasn't ready initially to keep track of two dozen superfolks and a similar amount of bad guys.

Back several decades ago, when I first started following funny books, most heroes worked solo or, at the most, with a boy companion. I accepted and liked the Justice Society when they came along, but I always figured that was about as big a crowd as I could reasonably handle without confusion. But here with the Secret Wars of Jim Shooter, Michael Zeck, John Beatty and Tom DeFalco I had to cope with a cast of more than fifty. Plus a storyline heavy with metaphysical implications. When the stranded superheroes, toward the end of the first installment, elected Captain America the leader of the pack, I commenced feeling less disoriented. He was an old acquaintance of mine, first met back in 1941. Had I been suddenly whisked off to an out of the way spot in the universe with this bunch, I'd have cast my vote for Cap, too. Besides which, a leader who's decked out in the stars and stripes is bound to command respect from his opponents, even out there.

Determined not to let the complexities of the narrative deter me, I plodded on from issue to issue, episode to episode—"Prisoners of War!", "Situation: Hopeless!", "Berserker!",


AT THAT MOMENT, IN STEWART GADWALL'S APARTMENT...
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT--YOU COULD DO ANYTHING YOU WANT--BUT YOU DON'T QUITE GROK WHAT IT IS TO WANT SOMETHING? WILD!
I SURE KNOW WHAT I WANT, BOY, IF I HAD POWER--!
YOU WANT TO SEE SOME DESIRE MADE INTO REALITY--? YOU WANT TO SEE WISH-FULFILLMENT IN ACTION--? WHY DON'T YOU GIVE ME SOME POWER?!

LOOK AT ME! HE MADE ME INTO WHAT I'VE ALWAYS FANTASIZED--! A CRUSADING SUPER HERO--! BEHOLD


THE BEYONDER!
THAR SHE BLOWS, ALL RIGHT--BUT, YOU KNOW... THAT'S NOT HOW I PICTURED HIM! WOLVERINE--?
NAH! I'D HAVE FIGURED HIM TO BE LESS LIKE A CARTOON CHARACTER, NIGHTCRAWLER!
WHY WOULD AN OMNIPOTENT ALIEN BE DESTROYING THOSE TEEVEE STUDIOS? WHAT'S HE BEEN WATCHING?
WHAT HE'S DOIN' DOWN THERE DOESN'T LOOK FUNNY TO ME, KITTY! Y'ALL BETTER GET SERIOUS--! HE'S DOWNRIGHT DANGEROUS!
MAKE ME REWRITE MY SCRIPTS, WILL YOU? PURVEYORS OF PABLUM! TAKE THAT!
YOU SLIME WHO FORCE MORONIC MEDIOCRITY UPON THE MINDLESS MASSES--! NO WONDER THEY'RE ILLITERATE VEGETABLES! THIS'LL TEACH YOU!
NBC
KOOM!
THH
WHAT IS HE...A CRITIC?
JUST RUN, JERK! YOU WANT TO DIE?
MUST BE SOME KIND OF MUTANT TERRORIST!
RUN!

"...And Dust To Dust!", etc.—telling myself this was a good practice for my fast-approaching retirement years, when I intend to while away the afternoon hours watching the ABC soap operas. I figured if I could keep from confusing Absorbing Man with Molecule Man and so on, then I wouldn't have any trouble sorting out the multitude of characters on **General Hospital** and **One Life To Live.** The concept of the Beyonder—"I am from beyond! Slay your enemies and all you desire shall be yours!"—unsettled me at first. Deity types who appear as dazzling light showing through a rift in the void usually serve to remind me that I still haven't gotten around to working out a completely satisfying cosmology of my own.

Eventually, however, I was caught up by Shooter's narrative. At about issue 4 this was, when "a mountain range that would dwarf the Andes" dropped on our unsuspecting heroes. Then it was I woke up to the fact I was in familiar territory after all. This was, for all its cosmic trappings and massive scale, matinee at the Rivoli stuff. From then on I whizzed right along from cliffhanger to cliffhanger, enjoying most of them. I was particularly taken with the grandscale stunts the Beyonder pulled to put together this battleground. The idea of swiping "a whole suburb of Denver" struck me as expecially nifty and I've been trying to come up with a way to assimilate that into one of my own science fiction yarns.

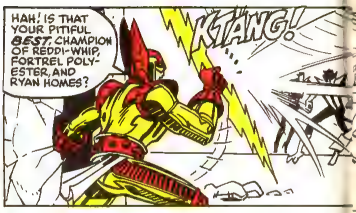
When I felt myself sufficiently steeped in the major battles and chief combatants of the first phase of the Secret Wars, I got security clearance from Marvel's helpful publicity man, Steve Saffel. It was Saffel who informed me that the II team was going to be slightly different from the one initially announced. Shooter was still writing, Bob Budiansky was still editing and Steve Leialoha was still inking. Sal Buscema, however, had been scratched as penciller and replaced by Al Milgrom.

THE EDITOR...

My first contact was with Budiansky. He's been with Marvel, on and off staff, for about eight and a half years. During that time he's scripted, pencilled and edited, working on such characters as Sub-Mariner, Fantastic Four, Daredevil

and Ghost Rider. My opening question had to do with how he and Shooter will be collaborating on the **Secret Wars II** project. "Usually I sit down with him and discuss a little bit of what's going in the next plot," he answered. "This is his baby, you know. He created the concept and has a pretty solid idea of where it's going. Usually as we go from plot to plot, he'll go over the ideas with me. And I have some input."

Since Shooter pretty much runs the whole shebang at Marvel, I couldn't help wondering how you go about editing your boss. I inquired of Budiansky if he could make changes and disagree. "I've said things that have changed one part or another," he told me. "The thing is, I don't find his ideas the kind of ideas I'd reject—they're very solid. I can change them, but I don't know if that occassion will come up, though." At the time I talked with Budiansky, late in February, he said that Shooter had "the whole nine episodes very loosely strung together. He knows what each issue is going to concentrate on," but doesn't have all the specifics worked out. The second series is being produced like most

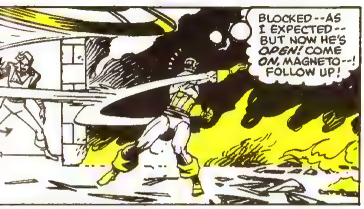


other Marvel comics, meaning Shooter gives the plot—"He happens to write in longhand"—to Milgrom, who then lays the story out. Shooter builds his script from the pencilled pages.

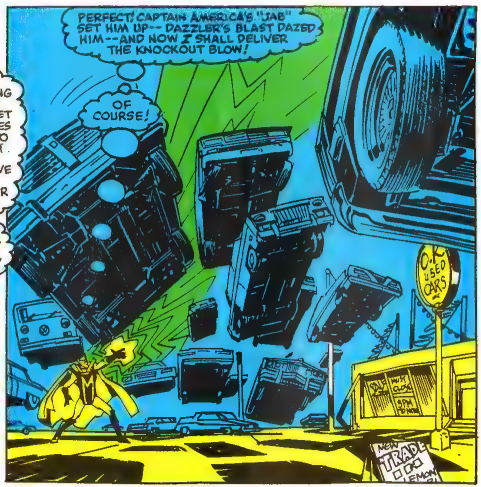
As Marvel's advance advertising points out, this go-round of the saga will take place on Earth and be played out not only in **Secret Wars II**, but several other titles each month as well. The first issue, out in April and coverdated July, ties in with **New Mutants** 30, **Captain America** 308, **X-Men** 196 and **Iron Man** 197. (Note: A complete listing of the crossover issues for the entire series appeared in the May issue of **COMICS FEATURE**.) According to editor Budiansky "every single title in the Marvel Universe" will be involved at least once by the time the dust has died from the last battle.

Budiansky then explained the logistics of this massive operation. "We worked it out before the first issue was done," he said. "Worked out which issue would crossover with which of the other titles. That's already on a chart that every editor has. And as we get up to those issues that particular editor of that book meets with his writer and they'll talk with Jim and me." Getting somewhat more specific, he added, "For every issue of **Secret Wars II** there are three or four other titles involved. The way it works is—it's not like you pick up the last page of **Secret Wars** issue 2 and it leads directly to four issues. But what might happen is it'll lead into one of those issues that are crossovers that month. Perhaps an incident in **Secret Wars** that has bigger repercussions will lead into a story or just part of a story in another title." The major factor in all the crossovers will be the Beyonder. "A lot of what it's about is the Beyonder," says Budiansky. "He has rather profound effects on everything he comes in contact with."

After assuring me that the Beyonder wasn't **the** deity but only a somewhat godlike alien, Budiansky amplified on his part in the second series. "This



NOW, DAZZLER--! *NOW!*
AHH!
THE SOUND OF CAP'S RICOCHETING SHIELD PLUS ALL THE OTHER RACKET AROUND HERE GIVES ME THE ENERGY TO RADIATE ENOUGH LIGHT TO PIERCE THOSE PROTECTIVE GOGGLES AND BLIND HIM FOR A SECOND!
I *HOPE!* DON'T LEAVE ME HUNG OUT TO DRY HERE, MAGNETO!

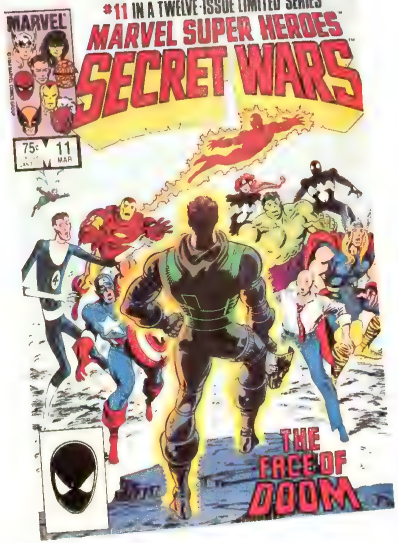


time he finally comes to Earth," he explained. "He basically started the Secret Wars to examine these rather interesting creatures—what he thought of as imperfect creatures. He never wanted anything, didn't understand want. When he did the Secret Wars, though, he realized there were creatures with desires and wants. He arranged the battles to examine all of these things."

Are we actually going to see him this time around? "Yes, he comes to Earth and he takes a human form. He wants to learn for himself what it is to have human desires and wants." When I pressed for specifics, Budiansky told me, "In the first issue you'll see one version of him. He's going to change. See, he can do virtually anything. So his form will gradually evolve. But in the first issue he looks kind of ridiculous. Because what he does is takes parts of the bodies of all the superheroes and villains from **Secret Wars** I and puts them together to make a body for himself. And that's how he arrives on Earth."

Not only is the Beyonder the star of the new **Secret Wars** series, he'll figure in all the crossovers, too. "Sometimes the whole story might involve the Beyonder or the repercussions of what he's done. Sometimes it'll just be a scene or two in a story. Sometimes he'll appear, others he won't. There's

MEANWHILE...
WHEN THIS FORM WAS ATTACKED... THAT WAS EXPERIENCE! THIS PERCEIVING OF OTHERS IS NOT EXPERIENCE. OBSERVING ALONE IS NOT EXPERIENCE!
AND YET, MUCH OBSERVING GOES ON HERE!
SONY
SALE ON VCRS
TAPE DECK
VIDEO



no rigid formula as to the way this'll work." Even events that don't involve the alien visitor will effect the overall operations of other titles. "For instance, one thing that's in the first issue is that Magneto's delegated the job of running the Mutants and the X-Men by Professor X, because he's incapacitated. And we'll keep that current with other titles." Some of the new characters, such as Volcana, who showed up in the first series, will be returning. And they may find their way into the crossovers. Budiansky wasn't, however, certain about the ultimate fate of the new Spider-Woman.

Only the first issue was finished when I talked to Budiansky. "We're not very far ahead at all at the moment," he said. "We're only right now working on issue 2. Which means we're not, as far as comic book deadlines go, ahead at all. We're trying to catch up." I closed

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certainly aware, George Jetson is a hard-working, honest, lovable husband who is devoted to his family, which consists of his wife Jane (a typical, 50s-style housewife), teenaged daughter Judy, nine-year-old son Elroy and their dog Astro. The family lives in the Sky Pad Apartments while George works for Spacely Sprockets, which supplies materials to such futuristic corporations as General Rotors.

Inventions which the family uses include a seeing-eye vacuum cleaner, which has two electronic eyes that seek out dust and debris; a foodrackacycle which stores, processes, prepares and serves meals; and a shower which operates much like a car wash in which you are transported under the shower, then into the spin dry and finally into the talcum and finishing touch department. When son Elroy goes off to school in the rain, Jane Jetson sprays a raincoat on him and says: "Don't forget to peel it off when you get to school."

Challenge of the GoBots is yet another toy-inspired series. Sixty episodes will begin airing in the fall of 1985 along with 5 previously produced specials.

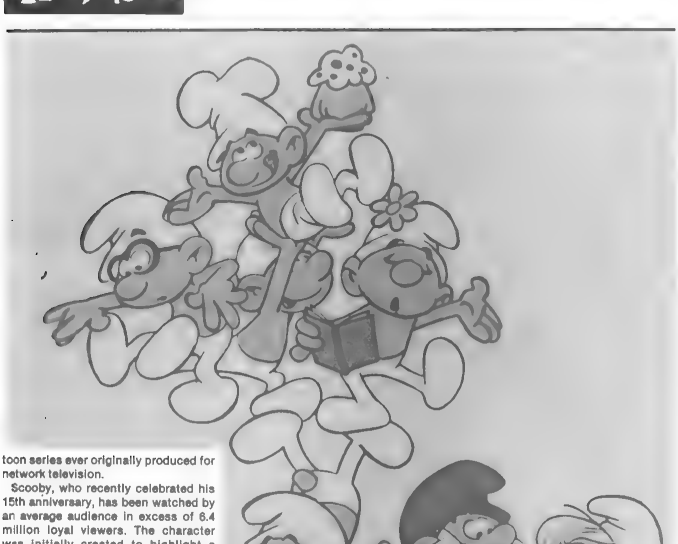
GoBots are robots which can become sports cars, cycles, jeeps, jets and other vehicles. The Tonka toys form a basis for the characters, who wage a continuous battle between good and evil. A special contingent from the high-tech planet of GoBotron set out to stop the disruption caused by a renegade band. Each GoBot possesses the amazing ability to become any vehicle at will. Humans will team up with each side.

SCOOBY DOO

Scooby-Doo is perhaps the most popular of the Hanna-Barbera characters currently airing. It is certainly the oldest of the continuing series now being shown.

When artists first sketched a Great Dane as mascot for four teenaged detectives in 1969, neither they, William Hanna nor Joseph Barbera were aware that the studio was about to give birth to the longest-running car-

Batman and Firestorm, two of the Superfriends, battle Darkseid, Lord of the Underworld.



toon series ever originally produced for network television.

Scooby, who recently celebrated his 15th anniversary, has been watched by an average audience in excess of 6.4 million loyal viewers. The character was initially created to highlight a group of teenagers' mystery-solving exploits. Barbera suggested, "Let's add a dog (a hallmark of Hanna-Barbera cartoons) who's a scaredy cat." The character's indetifiability with kids propelled Scooby Doo into superstar status.

Some ratings find Scooby more popular, more believable and better liked than The Muppets, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, The Smurfs and even Mickey Mouse! He is shown in 15 languages in 42 nations, including Qatar, Bangladesh, Ireland, Lebanon, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Germany and Libya. Fan mail comes in from such remote corners of the globe as Cameroun, Bahrain and Trinidad. Among his admirers is Michael Jackson, who visited Barbera to announce that Scooby is his favorite cartoon character.

BETTER THAN THE COMIC

Comic book fans probably find **Superfriends** the most easily recognized show on television—what other program offers a score of colorful, superpowered characters in continuing adventures?

The motto of the show: "Dedicated to freedom from evil the world over...evil of any kind...be it caused by man through greed, pollution, thoughtlessness or crime...through nature, by the destructive forces of volcano, hurricane or earthquake...acting as a human shield for the protection of mankind, is...The Justice League! Founders of The Justice

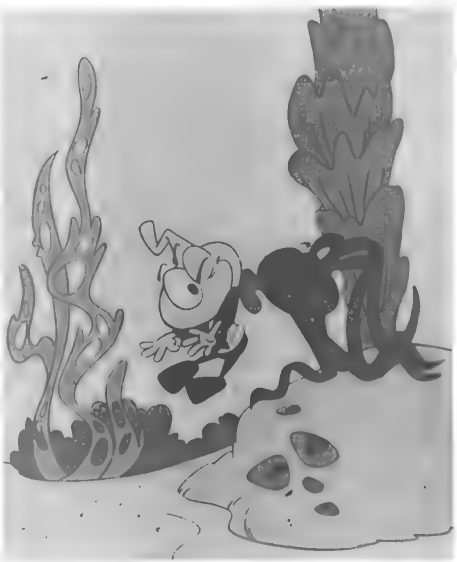
League are Superfriends, whose dedication to the cause of humanity is total." The producer is Kay Wright, the story editor Jeffrey Scott.

Voices for the show include Danny Dark as Superman, Shannon Farnon as Wonder Woman, Olan Soule as Batman, Casey Kasem as Robin and Bill Callaway as Aquaman. Zan and Gleek are voiced by Michael Bell, Jayna by Louise Williams. Other DC characters who put in appearances include Flash, The Atom, Hawkman and Green Lantern. Created especially for animation are Samurai, Apache Chief, Black Vulcan and El Dorado.

While most of these characters are more than familiar and the type of adventures in which they engage also fill the four-color pages of the comic book, it is interesting to note the differences. Particularly the new characters, who it was felt were necessary to create for television.

Samurai (an oriental), Apache Chief (American Indian), Black Vulcan (negro) and El Dorado (hispanic) each serve the same purpose—to represent minorities. Television finds that a group that includes an orphan from the planet Krypton, a police officer and his wife from Thanagar, a former king of Atlantis and a warrior of the alien Guardians is unrepresentative of modern society, even when joined by an Amazon. But it is quite true that there is not one nonwhite face among them. More recently the comic book has been completely revamped (and many feel ruined) in an attempt by DC to add minorities to the Justice League. While the cartoon series was able to preserve the character of the League and the mainstay heroes in the process, the comic book did not.

A good example of how the cartoon series is handled was the recent introduction of El Dorado. Of Hispanic origin, he resembles an Aztec sun god. His special cape, decorated with a portrait of the sun, enables him to dematerialize and reappear wherever he needs to. He can only teleport himself with the aid of the cape. His other amazing power is the ability to project holograms by special rays emitted from his eyes. That power, along with his extraordinary strength, always remains with him. El Dorado is a succinct, carefully designed hero whose powers tie in with his motif, does not duplicate the other characters in the group and yet meshes into the spirit of the series perfectly.



Smurfs and Snorks: incredibly successful little people from Belgium.

An additional new direction for the show was recently announced, perhaps as a reaction to the various anti-violence pressure groups. The company has declared that "These programs will be done in a different light. No longer will brute force be used to solve problems. Superman, Aquaman, Wonder Woman, Batman and Robin...they demonstrate brain is more important than brawn. They will proclaim their noble purpose in words as well as deeds, showing by example that even superior beings, with superpowers, can find no greater purpose than to protect humanity. They will fulfill the oath of the Justice League...To Do Good!..by outwitting, outthinking, outmaneuvering those who would attempt to harm society, without resorting to violence."

In many ways this sounds like an extension of the original comic book series created by Gardner Fox and

The tiny Biskitts dogs

Mike Sekowsky (a series badly missed by many). It is indeed refreshing in these days when the comic book bearing the title showcases the self-centered moanings of a group of breakdancers and street urchins.

SNORKS, SMURFS AND BISKITTS

From a Hanna-Barbera handout: "Deep under the sea is a mystical underwater world called Snorkland, inhabited by an assortment of tiny teenaged creatures and their relatives. Each Snork is a different color and is no bigger than your thumb. All Snorks sport snorkles, a protruding gill which propels them swiftly through their underwater world and allows them to breathe. When Snorks get excited, their gill makes a little 'snork' sound—hence their name.

"Snorkland is a complex city carved into the coral reefs. It is teeming with activity as the Snorks harness the steam from the ocean floor to power the city and make organic phosphorus into glowing blocks of light."

Snorks were created by Freddy Monnickendam as a comic book in Belgium with the help of Nic Broca, a professor at that nation's Academy of Art. The characters, obvious copies of The Smurfs, became popular in their own right and have been merchandised into toys, games and apparel. Hanna-Barbera Productions and Sepp International, the same team who created the Emmy Award-winnig **Smurfs**, produce this series for American television.

Smurfs is the original. They are popular in virtually every country in the world and have been the basis of a merchandising boom that has seldom been equalled. They took America by storm—the nation went "Smurf-crazy."

The concept of the show is amazingly simple: "Tucked away in the middle of a medieval forest is the charming, unique village of the Smurfs. It is populated by the little blue people who are only three apples tall and live in mushroom houses. A new addition to their village this season is a Baby Smurf who's only one apple high" — from a Hanna-Barbera handout.

The Smurfs are the enchanting creation of Belgian artist Pierre "Peyo" Culliford, who introduced their special world 25 years ago as a comic strip. The animated series has won the Emmy Award for creativity. The producer is Gerard Baldwin. Baldwin also serves as supervising story editor, while Ted Anasti and Patsy Cameron are the story editors. Key voices are supplied by Paul Winchell (Gargamel), Don Messick (Azrael), Lucille Bliss (Smurfette), Danny Goldman (Brainy), June Foray (Jokey), Bill Calaway (Clumsy, Painter), Frank Welker (Peewit, Hefty, Poet), Henry Polic (Tracker), Hamilton Camp (Greedy, Harmony), Michael Bell (Johan, Lazy, Handy, Grouchy), Julia

Dees (Baby Smurf) and Bob Holt (King). Jennifer Darling, Linda Gary, Jack Angel, Alan Oppenheimer, Kip King, Marshall Efron and Alan Young provide additional voices.

The series offers insight into the interactions of an entire society, how individuals live and work and how they relate to each other. Often a lesson is taught by the outcome of actions. An additional attraction of the show is a segment featuring Johan and Peewit. Johan is a young swashbuckler and Peewit his comic sidekick. Peyo actually created Johan before he created the Smurfs.

Johan is the personification of total goodness—clean, reverent, trustful, loyal and brave—and a squire of the good kingdom neighboring the Smurfs village. He is daring and witty and does everything with flair. Peewit is the court jester who accompanies Johan on his adventures. All of Peewit's personality traits are those of the Smurfs amplified: greedier than Greedy, lazier than Lazy and prone to playing more pranks than Jokey. He always remains on the sidelines during battle—unless, of course, his best friend Johan is threatened. Then Peewit's blood boils, and with a steady snort he lunges into the fight, taking on villains even three times his size. His mount, Biquette, is a crazy little goat.

Johan and Peewit have the distinction of being the first humans to befriend the Smurfs.

Yet another hidden society of cute characters are the **Biskitts**. Instead of elfin creatures of varying colors, they are dogs. Hidden away on Biskitt Island in the middle of a murky swamp is an entire canine civilization of tiny pups of different shapes and temperaments. They live in Biskitt Castle and spend their time frolicking in a semi-idyllic setting of normal-sized flowers, trees, frogs and the like. Their days are filled with adventures, often involving the despotic King Max of Lower Suburbia. The Biskitts were entrusted with the treasury by the former king, theirs to guard until a fair and just ruler once again claims the throne. King Max and his rangy dogs Fang and Snarl, and his silly jester, Shecky, are determined to find the treasure.

Pinky, the son of The Pink Panther.

The wildcat Scratch is after the Biskitts — to eat for dinner. But the Biskitts manage to survive, riding into battle on the backs of frogs, sounding their charge with trumpet-like flowers.

The producer is Art Scott, the story editors Duane Poole and Tom Swale. Key voices include Darryl Hickman, B.J. Ward, Dick Beals, Kathleen Helppie, Bob Holt, Kip King and Jerry Houser. Peter Cullen, Ken Mars, Jennifer Darling, Henry Gibson and Marshall Efron provide additional voices.

The Biskitts are part of a long line of successful Hanna-Barbera cartoons based on dogs, among them Huckleberry Hound, Augie Doggie and Doggie Daddy, Dynomutt, Mumbly, Precious Pupp, Hong Kong Phooey and the perennial Scooby Doo.

Joseph Barbera got the idea for **The Biskitts** one day during a business lunch at the Polo Lounge in the Beverly Hills Hotel (just a few minutes from the COMICS FEATURE offices, coincidentally). A conversation triggered an idea that he quickly jotted down on a paper napkin. The gifted animator sketched a few preliminary characters and brought them back to his studio for artists to design further. While the artists busily sketched, Barbera met with writers and created the universe in which each character would fit.

The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Tournament of Roses Parade were among the first appearances made by costumed versions of the canine characters during their first year on the air.

Similarities between the H-B series abound. The use of furniture and vehicles that fit the particular symbolism of the characters involved is a major one. Whether it is Batman's Batmobile, a futuristic car for George Jetson, furniture made from underwater plantlife or the implements of the Biskitt's civilization, which are carved from bones, each capsulizes the motif of the characters. Each group is small and cute, perhaps to mirror the children who make up the primary viewing audience. And violence never really reaches its conclusion...no one is hurt, the good guys never really lose. That's the way it is in the funtastic world of Hanna-Barbera.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

FLYING HIGH

Simultaneously with the new **Batman** and **Detective Comics**, Hawkman was granted his own comic. Written by Fox and drawn by Murphy Anderson, Hawkman and Hawkgirl encountered complex mysteries that reflected both their otherworldly origin and their fascination, as museum curators, with Earth's past civilizations. In their first story, Hawkman and Hawkgirl have a contest, for instance, to see whether earthly detection procedures or Thanagarian devices are better suited for catching crooks. In the second, they battle a Mayan Indian in the ruins of an ancient city in Central America who, with extraterrestrial gadgets, has transformed himself into Chac, the ancient god of rain (HM 1, May 1964).

WITH THIS POWER

With the waning interest in science fiction and the upsurge of humanization pioneered at Marvel, Schwartz arrived at one of his minor concessions to changing times. Although the basic timbre of his stories remained the same, a large number of them now involved the personal sides of his heroes. In **Green Lantern**, for instance, Schwartz launched an intermittent series of backup stories featuring Hal Jordan's two brothers, Jim and Jack, and their stern uncle Jeremiah. Most of these tales revolved around the conviction held by Jim's wife that Jim Jordan was secretly Green Lantern. Some crime or other usually occurred during these family get-togethers, and as Green Lantern was always around to solve it, Jim's wife was further convinced that Jim, not Hal, was in fact the Emerald Gladiator. Another human interest backup series was launched in the pages of the **Atom**, revolving around the invention of a "time pool" by Professor Hyatt, one of Ray Palmer's colleagues (A 3, Nov. 1962). In each of them, Ray Palmer, in his secret identity of the Atom, is drawn into the time-pool and thence back in time, where he meets such historical personages as Ben Franklin, Edgar Allan Poe and Henry Fielding. In each instance he makes a key, albeit unheralded, contribution to history.

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU... IT'S SCHWARTZ IS WHAT THEY CALL ME--
IT STANDS FOR BE ORIGINAL! WHEN EITHER OF YOU HAS AN ORIGINAL IDEA, IT'LL BE TIME FOR ME TO RETIRE!
THE PLACE IS ROCKEFELLER CENTER, IN THE HEART OF NEW YORK CITY... AND THAT LOUD, CRUSTY FELLOW EDITS COMIC BOOKS FOR A LIVING...
YOU ALWAYS KEEP TELLING ME YOU'RE SUCH A GENIUS, BATES-- HAVE YOU GOT A JUSTICE LEAGUE PLOT YET?
HOW ABOUT YOU, MAGOON?
LISTEN, JULIE-- WHEN YOU DO RETIRE, CAN I HAVE YOUR DESK CHAIR?

JULIUS SCHWARTZ PLOTTING WITH CARY BATES AND ELLIOT MAGGIN.

SERVANT PROBLEM & FAST MEN

Many interesting changes were worked on Batman and his cast of supporting characters, most prominently the death of Bruce Wayne's loyal butler, Alfred (Det. 328, June 1964). Later, however, the producers of the **Batman** tv show deemed that Alfred was an indispensable member of the household, so the Schwartz stable contrived to bring him back in a long continued storyline running solely in the Bob Kane-illustrated stories; it emerged that Alfred had miraculously survived, become deranged, and attacked his old friends repeatedly as the mysterious "Outsider", before coming to his senses. The tv show also brought about the introduction of a new cast member, the new Batgirl, who is secretly the daughter of Police Commissioner Gordon (Det. 359, Jan. 1967).

AS FLASH CRISS-CROSSES THE CITY...
THERE HE IS-- WITH IRIS!?
IT'S FLASH... HELP!
SO MY NEMESIS FOUND A WAY TO GET THROUGH MY BARRIER! I DON'T KNOW HOW! -- BUT I DO KNOW HE'S ABOUT TO REGRET IT!

Schwartz humanized The Flash by wedding him to Iris West — and brought about the meeting of the Justice League and the Justice Society.

Handled much better than the members of the old "Bat-family", she was usually a source of light-hearted fun.

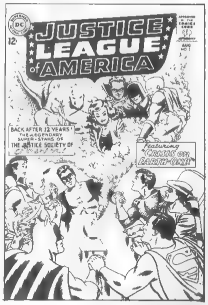
But it was in the pages of Flash that the greatest effort at humanization transpired. Between Barry Allen's marriage (F 165, Nov. 1966) and subsequent revelation of his secret identity to Iris West, a number of tales revolving around Iris's father Professor West—an absent-minded scientist whose dizziness always landed him in a jam (beginning F 134, Feb. 1963)—and a pair of beautiful stories about movie actress Daphne Dean, a former sweetheart of Barry's, the personal life of the Flash was rounded out to an extent that no other Schwartz character had enjoyed.

Team-ups also became prominent during this period. Flash and Green Lantern guest-starred regularly in each other's titles. Atom and Hawkman shared a few adventures. Batman and the Elongated Man were united in the pages of **Detective Comics** for a few full-length stories. In his own slot, the Elongated Man visited such heroes as Flash, Green Lantern and the Atom in their respective cities. Unlike the guest appearances in Marvel comics, however, the DC heroes nearly always met as friends, not as antagonists.

GOLDEN OLDIES

This growing surge of guest stars sparked off another new trend in Schwartz comics. Following on the heels of the revival of Jay Garrick, the Flash of the 1940s, the Justice Society of America—Dr. Fate, Black Canary, Hourman and the "Earth-2" Atom, Flash, Green Lantern and Hawkman—returned triumphantly to help the Justice League in a case (JLA 21, Aug. 1963). This crossover became an annual tradition, and from it sprang other Earth-1/Earth-2 team-ups in individual titles. Jay became a regular visitor in **The Flash**, Alan Scott, the Golden Age Green Lantern, dropped in on Hal Jordan (GL 40, Oct. 1965), and last of all the original Atom teamed up with his Silver Age namesake (Atom 29, Mar. 1967). Now along with modern hero teamups, visitations from Golden Age heroes became regular events to look forward to.

The next step in the revival of Golden Age heroes occured in **Showcase** numbers 55 and 56 (Apr. & June 1965) when Dr. Fate and Hourman teamed up for a 1940s style adventure by Fox and Anderson. This triggered a short-lived spotlighting of Earth-2 heroes without participation of their Silver Age counterparts. A Starman/Black Canary teamup came next (Brave & Bold


JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
12¢
BACK AFTER 12 YEARS! THE EXCITING ALL-STAR TEAM OF THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA!
Introducing HOURMAN and MIKE TYSON

61 & 62, Sep. and Nov. 1965), and shortly thereafter the Spectre, the nearly omnipotent crime-fighting ghost of the 1940s, returned for a three issue tryout in **Showcase**. The Golden Age teamups were conventional superhero fare, but the Spectre stood apart with an otherworldly flavor far different from Schwartz's usual scientific slant. In his second adventure, for example, he pursues the mystery of a man with no shadow through "planes of existence that have no counterpart on Earth," to "an eldritch

world" where he battles the demon Shathan (Show 61, Apr. 1968). Perhaps because of this difference the Spectre was the only one of these revivals to receive his own title (Dec. 1967). But ultimately, Fox's lighthearted writing and Anderson's restrained art were not adequate for such a mystical concept; the "Discarnate Detective" seemed to be just an old Schwartz hero out of his element.

SAME OLD ROUTINES

In such ill-fated ventures as these, it became apparent that a little staleness had crept into the Schwartz stable. Indeed, by the end of 1965, the quality of the entire line was starting to dip. Schwartz and his staff had been toiling on the same titles in the same style for years. The routine was beginning to wear on them, but their inability to innovate showed that they could no longer escape.

Two specific factors contributed to the downslide. First, John Broome cut back on his scripting, forcing Gardner Fox to take up the slack. But this was not the same Fox of the early years; Fox's plots, perhaps due to overwork, lost a little of their ingenuity, while his scripting became wordy and bogged down by gratuitous descriptions. Second, artists Infantino, Anderson and Sekowsky lost much of the clarity that Schwartz had always insisted on. At the same time, the entire DC line had adopted a new style of page layout, shifting to fewer panels per page and far less detail per panel. Schwartz's artists did not adapt well to the change, losing the tight pristine line that had characterized their earlier work.

Schwartz responded by reshuffling the inking chores in his stable. Sid Greene was assigned to Infantino and Sekowsky in 1966 and succeeded admirably in tightening up their new work. This left Gil Kane, whom Greene had been inking for a few years, to ink his own pencils, a change which was also very much for the better. And DC continued to maintain the superb coloring (by Jerry Serpe and Jack Adler), lettering (by Gaspar Saladino) and the high printing quality which had distinguished it since the late 1950s.

THE MANY FOES OF GREEN LANTERN

SONAR, SULTAN OF SUPER-SONIC SOUND!
THE SHARK, PREYER ON HUMAN BEINGS!
BLACKHAND, THE CLICHE' MINIMUM!
DR. POLARIS--MASTER OF MAGNETISM!
STAR SAPPHIRE--MISTRESS OF MYSTIC MIGHT!

But even this was not enough. A change in the basic fabric of the stories was needed.

HIT THE ROAD, HAL

A harbinger of what was to come suddenly appeared in the pages of **Green Lantern** (number 49, Dec. 1966). Carol Ferris, Green Lantern's long-time sweetheart, suddenly takes up with another man. Crushed, Green Lantern decides he must leave Coast City.

In the very next issue, we find Hal Jordan, alias Green Lantern, on the road. We learn that Hal will no longer be surrounded by his old supporting cast or content in Coast City. In fact, we no longer know what to expect from his adventures. Where will Hal go next? Who will he meet? What odd job will he assume? For the first time, a Schwartz title was not predictable.

Also for the first time, a Schwartz character was now wracked with complex emotions, no longer just the

determination to battle evil or wed his girl. Hal was now full of sorrow at having lost Carol, as confused as we were as to what to do next with his life, and desperate to prove his worth to himself as a man, not just a superhero.

This desperation led to a vow to rely more on his fists than on his power ring. And what a great vow that turned out to be for the readers, as this was the period in which Gil Kane fully blossomed into the supreme action artist in the field. Kane had long been an admireer of Kirby, and as Kirby's art improved at Marvel, Kane's followed suit.

Where Kane had long shone in his dynamic covers, he now filled every panel with the same fluidity and punch. When Green Lantern let loose with a roundhouse right at an opponent, the reader virtually found himself rolling with the impact. But Green Lantern did not become just a mindless brawler; Kane imbued him with a heroic nobility and savage determination through a superb understanding of anatomy and facial expressions. Kane's inking augmented the effect with its rough and masculine, nearly sculptural quality. Through his own work and that of hordes of imitators, Kane would have a profound effect on the comics of the future.

The stories themselves alternated between Hal's footloose adventures on earth and far-flung space operas. In the one, Hal moved from city to city, took on new jobs (insurance investigator, toy salesman, etc.) and met new people. In the other, he travelled to distant worlds to wage furious battle with the likes of Thraxon the Powerful, a fierce warrior bent on conquering the home world of another Green Lantern (GL 50, Jan. 1967). In a two-part fistic extravaganza (GLs 55 & 56, Sep. and Oct. 1967), he wreaks havoc on a horde of criminals who have escaped from a prison planet where they had been sentenced by the Guardians of the Universe for having commited horrible crimes.

Although gradually, the quiet solidity of DC's Silver Age tradition began to unravel in the pages of **Green Lantern**. It would soon become evident that Green Lantern was only the first, and that innumerable changes were imminent at DC. The seeds of a new era were being planted.

Publishers Picks

It seems to be the thing to do. Everyone else has done it. Now it's my turn to undertake that vainglorious task—selecting my top ten favorite current comics and laying them down on you as gospel. I have been reading, writing about and selling in various capacities (let me tell you about the time I was sales manager for the largest distributor of comic books in the world . . .) for quite some time. I do have a pretty good ear to the wind on these things as a number of personal friends make their livings by working on comic books in assorted capacities. The books I like do not follow a particular pattern—some are small press, others published by the largest houses; some are on cheap newsprint, others on that expensive, fancy stuff; some are superhero while others are decidedly not. Many of the titles I like best are not available where you may regularly buy your comics, but you should be aware of them nonetheless.

1) SABLE

When I last talked to Mike Grell I told him that I really didn't like anything he did until Sable came along, and he agreed that he didn't either. But there is magic in this book, the story of a two-fisted adventurer with a heart of gold and a hungry wallet.

2) POWER PACK

I interviewed Louise Jones, the editor of all the mutant titles, just before she became Louise Simonson, author of this title. At the time she told me that she strongly admired Robert Heinlein, particularly his juveniles—it shows!

3) MYTH ADVENTURES

Friend Hank Stine used to be an editor at Donning and one of their two top book series is Robert Asprin's "Myths," the other is Elfquest. So its only natural that the people who created Elfquest produce the comic book version of the Myths. Fine fantasy that reads like science fiction.

4) FANTASTIC FOUR

When I talked to John Byrne for the 27th issue of this mag he told me that he felt the way to save the FF was to go back to its roots. He also told me that he had yet to do work as good as that done by Lee and Kirby. He's right on both counts and the book is really looking fine.

5) TEEN TITANS

Marv Wolfman drifted about for quite a few years, from Spider to vampires to teenagers and back, until he found his niche. But now that he has he is truly producing some of the best storytelling in comics and offers a group of individuals who are highly interesting—the fact that they happen to be superheroes is secondary.

6) THE LEGION OF SUPERHEROES

This book makes my list mainly by nostalgia. I grew up on this one back in the days when it was written by Edmond Hamilton and Jim Shooter—let me know if anyone starts writing it again.

7) ROM

One of the few Bill Mantlo-written books that I enjoy. With Steve Ditko and Craig Russell handling the art chores, who could complain? But where will it go now that the wars are over?

8) MS. TREE

Honest, this would be on the list even if Max wasn't writing it. The fact that it is about the only continuing detective in comics would place it there alone, even if the writing wasn't excellent and the art more than passable. But do they have to use the weird colors? Either put the full color back (please) or stick to black & white.

9) THOR

Ah, Walter, you really have breathed life back into the old Thunder God. Lee and Kirby created a concept with the power of the ancient myths and no one found it until you.

10) AVENGERS

This one hits the spot more often than not, and I like it best when they put the real superstars of Marvel into it like in the old days. With pencils and inks by John Buscema and Tom Palmer, how could anyone fail to love this one?

That about ranks them from highest to lowest of the best ten books now being published. Do remember that a change in creative team or direction could quickly spell a difference in quality and that all of these magazines are vulnerable to cancellation, especially titles like **Sable, Ms. Tree** and **Myth Adventures** that come from smaller houses and are the products of obviously distinct personalities. But even the big league players from DC and Marvel are very dependent on individual talent. **Thor** without Simonson, **FF** without Byrne, **Teen Titans** without Wolfman or **Power Pack** without Simonson would probably not be worth picking up.

Do try a few of these if you do not read them already. And send letters in to let us know whether or not you agree with my choices. I'd love to hear other opinions.

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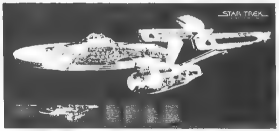

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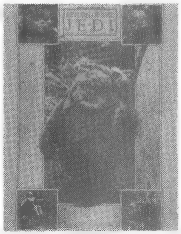

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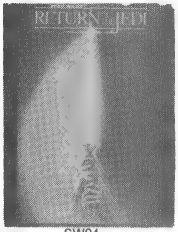

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Warlord 97—Burkett, artist and inker not set; Buckler/DeCarlo

DC COMICS

DC Comics Presents 85 (Superman and Swamp Thing)—Moore; Veitch, Williamson

Best of DC Digest 64 (Legion of Superheroes)—Siegel&Hamilton/Klein; Mooney; Forte; Moldoff/Cullins

Justice League of America 242—Conway; Tuska, Machlan; Patton/Machlan

Crisis on Infinite Earths 6—Wolfman, Perez, Ordway; Perez

Fury of Firestorm—Conway; Chen/Kayanan; Akin/Garvey; Keyanan

Tales of the Teen Titans 57—Wolfman; Patton; DeCarlo; Patton/Giordano

Vigilante/21—Kupperberg; T. Smith; Magyar; Smith/Magyar

Deadman 5 (reprint)—ALL Adams

Losers Special 1—Kanigher; Hunt/Glanzman, Esposito; Kubert

Red Tornado 3 (miniseries)—Busiek; Infantino, McLaughlin; Infantino/McLaughlin

Batman 387—Moench; Mandrake; Mandrake,

The Flash 349—Bates; Infantino; McLaughlin, Infantino/Janson

Superman 411—Bates; Swan; Williamson; Janson

Star Trek 18—Kupperberg; Sutton; Villagran, Sutton/Villagran

Amethyst 9—Cohn&Mishkin; Colon; Tanghal; Cullins/Tanghal

Arak, Son of Thunder 48—R.&D Thomas; DeZuniga; DeZuniga; DeZuniga

G I Combat 279

Omega Men 30—Klein; McManus; Mitchell, McManus

The Legion of Super-Heroes 14—Levitz; Lightle; Mahlstedt; Lightle/Mahlstedt

New Teen Titans Annual 1—Wolfman; Hannigan, Tanghal, Hannigan/Tanghal

Super Powers 1 (miniseries)—Kupperberg; Kirby; Theakston, Kirby/Theakston

Batman and the Outsiders 25—Barr; Davis; Davis; Davis

Green Lantern 192—Englehart; Staton; Patterson, Staton/Patterson

Sgt. Rock 404—Kanigher; Gonzales; Gonzales; Kubert

Blue Devil 16—Cohn&Mishkin, Kupperberg; Magyar; Cullins/Martin

Who's Who 7—Wein; various artists; Perez(cover)

Hex 1—Fleisher, Texeira; Texiera

Superman Annual 11—Moore; Gibbons; Gibbons

Infinity Inc. 18—R. Thomas; McFarlane; DeZuniga; McFarlane/DeZuniga

The New Teen Titans 12—Wolfman; artist and inker not announced

Swamp Thing 40—Moore; Bissette; Totleben; Bissette/Totleben

Tales of the Legion of Superheroes 327—Levitz; Giffen; Mahstedt; Lightle/Mahlstedt

Action 571—Maggin, Hunt; Bolland

Detective 554—Moench; Janson; Patterson/Janson

World's Finest 319—Cavalieri; Delbo, Alcala

All-Star Squadron 49—R. Thomas, Harris; Colletta; Harris

Arion, Lord of Atlantis 35—Kupperberg; Duursema; Inker to be announced, Duursema

V 8—Bates; Infantino; DeZuniga, DeZuniga

Wonder Woman 327—Newell, Heck Heck

Ambush Bug 14 (miniseries)—Giffen&Fleming, Giffen; Oksner; Giffen/Oksner

Batman and the Outsiders Annual 2—Barr; Ross; Adkins; Aparo

Vigilante Annual 1—Kupperberg, Cowan; Magyar; Cowan/Magyar

MARVEL COMICS

The Thing 27—Carlin; Wilson; Sinnott

Daredevil 222—O'Neil, Mazzuchelli

New Mutants 31—Claremont; Sienkiewicz

Web of Spiderman 6—Fingeroth; LaRocque; Mooney; Byrne

Planet Terry 6—Herman; Kremer; D'Agostino

Peter Porker 3

Ewoks 3—Manak; Kremer; M. Severin

Clor', and Badger [illegible] Martin; Lopez/Martin

Dreadstar and Company 3—ALL Starlin

The Gargoyle 4—DeMatteis; Badger

Rawhide Kid 2—Mantlo; Trimpe; Taloc

Squadron Supreme 1—Gruenwald, Hall; Beatty

Swords of Swashbucklers 2—Mantlo; Gulce

Conan the King 30—Kraar; Docherty; Isherwood

Moonshadow 3—DeMatteis; Muth

The Life of Captain Marvel 2—Starlin and company

The Amazing Spider-Man 288—DeFalco; Frenz, Rubinstein

Captain America 309—Gruenwald; Neary; Janke

Power Pack 14—L. Simonson; Brigman; Wiacek

Micronauts 12—Gillis; Jones; Patterson

Alpha Flight 26—Byrne; Wiacek

Wally the Wizard 6—Brown; D'Agostino

The Further Adventures of Indiana Jones 31—Grant; Villamonte; Bulanadi

Dazzler 39—Goodwin; Chadwick; Gulce

Groo the Wanderer 7—Aragones with Evanier

Longshot 1—Nocenti; A. Adams; Portacio

Savage Sword of Conan 115—Yakata; Mayerick; Hickman(cover)

Black Dragon 3—Claremont; Bolton

The One 1—Veitch

Timespirits 5—Perry, Yeates

Marvel Age 30

The Incredible Hulk 311—Mantlo; Mignola, Talaoc

The Avengers 259—Stern; J Buscema; Palmer

Conan 174—Owsley; J. Buscema; Camp

Marvel Tales 179 (reprint)—Lee; Romita

X-Men 197—Claremont; Romita Jr.; Green

Rom 70—Mantlo; Ditko

Moon Knight 4—Zelenetz; Warner; Cruz

Power Man and Iron Fist 119—Owsley; Bright; Acerno

Royal Roy 3—Kay, Kremer; D'Agostino

Muppet Babies 3—Kay; M Severin

Get Along Gang 3—Manak; Colon; Roettcher

Solomon Kane 1—Macchio; Blevins; Carr

G.I. Joe 39—Hama; Whigham; Mushynsky

Web of Spider-Man Annual 1—Nocenti; Salmons

Marvel-Fanfare 22

Fantastic Four 282-Byrne; Ordway

Iron Man 198—O'Neil; Buckler, Akin&Garvin

Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man 106—Mantlo; McDonnell; Breeding

The New Defenders 147—Gillis; Perlin; Nichols

Star Wars 99—Duffy; Martin

Thor 359—all W Simonson

Elfquest 2—W.&R Pini

Secret Wars 3—Shooter; Milgrom; Lealoha

Transformers 8—Budiansky; Johnson; Joyce

Spider-Man Index 6—Olshevsky

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Coyote 13—Englehart, Truog, Springer

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DC Comics Presents 86—Kupperberg

Best of DC Digest 65—Mayer

Justice League of America 243—Conway, Tuska; Machlan; Patton/Machlan

Crisis on Infinite Earths 7—Wolfman; Perez; Ordway, Perez

Fury of Firestorm 40—Conway; Clark; Akin&Garvey, Clark

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Batman 388—Moench; Mandrake; Mandrake; Mandrake

The Flash 350—Bates; Infantino; McLaughlin; Infantino/Janson

Superman 412—Bates; Swan; Williamson; Janson

Star Trek 19—Koenig; Spiegle; Sutton/Villagran

Amethyst 10—Mishkin&Cohn, Colon; Smith; Colon/Smith

Arak 49—R.&D. Thomas; Infantino; DeZuniga; Infantino/DeZuniga

Omega Men 31—Klein; McManus; Inker not yet announced; McManus

The Legion of Super-Heroes 328—Levitz; Lightle; Mahlstedt; Lightle/Mahlstedt

Super Powers 2—Kupperberg; Kirby; Theakston; Kirby/Theakston

Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes 328—Levitz; Giffen&Lightle; Mahlstedt; Giffen/Mahlstedt

Action 572—Boldman; Boring

Detective 555—Moench; Janson; Janson, Janson

World's Finest 320—Cavalieri; Delbo; Alcala; Delbo

All-Star Squadron 50—Thomas, Jones; Ciark; Colletta

Arion, Lord of Atlantis 36—Kupperberg; Duursema, Duursema; Duursema

V 9—Bates; Infantino; DeZuniga; Barreto

Star Trek Annual 1—Barr; Ross; Villagran; Villagran

Nathaniel Dusk II 1—McGregor; Colan; Colan

The Legion of Super-Heroes Annual 1—Levitz, Giffen; Kesel; Giffen/Kesel

Swamp Thing 41—Moore; Bissette; Alcala, Bissette/Totleben

Batman and the Outsiders 26—Barr; Davis, Davis; Davis

Nathaniel Dusk II 1—McGregor; Colan; Colan

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Green Lantern 193—Englehart; Staton; Patterson; Hannigan&Staton&Patterson

Sgt Rock 405—Kanigher; Gonzales; Kubert

Warlord 98—Burkett; Kubert; inker not yet announced; Buckler

Blue Devil 17—Cohn&Mishkin; Kupperberg; Magyar; Cullins/Martin

Who's Who 8—Wein; various artists,

DC Comics Presents Annual 4—Maggin; Barreto; Ordway; Barreto

Talent Showcase 19—Rowlands, Wagner; Fern; Adkins

Infinity Inc. 19—Thomas; McFarlane; DeZuniga, McFarlane/DeZuniga

The New Teen Titans 13—Wolfman; artist not yet announced; Tanghal; cover artist not yet announced

MARVEL COMICS

The Thing 28—Carlon; Wilson, Sinnott

Daredevil 223—O'Neil; Mazzuchelli

New Mutants 32—Claremont; Leialoha

Web of Spider-Man 7—Fingeroth; LaRocque; Mooney

Planet Terry 7—Kay; Kremer; D'Agostino

Fraggle Rock 4—Kay; M. Severin

Strawberry Shortcake 4—Kay; Post; Edelman

Dreadstar and Company 4—all Starlin

Rawhide Kid 3—Mantlo; Trimpe; Talaoc

Squadron Supreme 2—Gruenwald; Hall; Beatty

The Sectaurs 3—Mantlo; Texeira; DelBeato

Starstruck 4—E. Lee; Kaluta

The Life of Captain Marvel 3—Starlin and company

The Amazing Spider-Man 269—DeFalco; Franz; Rubinstein

Captain America 310—Gruenwald; Neary, Janke

Power Pack 15—L. Simonson; Brigman; Wiacek

Micronauts 13—Gillis; Jones, Patterson

Alpha Flight 27—Byrne; Wiacek

Wally the Wizard 7—all Bolling

Top Dog 4—Herman; Kremer; Roettcher

Doctor Strange 73—Stern; P. Smith; Austin

Heathcliff 4—DeCesare; Kremer; Roettcher

Groo the Wanderer 8—Aragones with Evanier

Longshot 2—Nocenti; A. Adams; Portacio

The Spectacular Spider-Man Annual 5—DeFalco, Cowan, Rubinstein

The Fantastic Four Index 1—Olshevsky

Savage Sword of Conan 116—Yakata, Kwapiaz

Black Dragon 4—Claremont; Bolton

The One—all Veitch

Sisterhood of Steel 5—Marx; Vosburg

Marvel Age 31

The Incredible Hulk 312—Mantlo; Mignola; Talaoc

The Avengers 260—Stern; J. Buscema; Palmer

Conan 175—Owsley; J. Buscema; Camp

Marvel Tales 180 (reprint)—S. Lee; Romita

X-Men 198—Claremont; Windsor-Smith

Rom 71—Mantlo, Ditko, Russell

Moon Knight 5—Zelenetz; Warner; Cruz

G.I Joe 40—Hama; Whigham; Mushynsky

The Eternals 1—Gillis; S. Buscema; Gordon

Dreadstar 20—Starlin; DeLaRosa

Fantastic Four 283—Byrne; Ordway

Iron Man 199—O'Neil; Buckler; Akin&Garvey

Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man 107—David; S. Buscema; Breeding

The New Defenders 148—Gillis; McDonnell, Nichols

Thor 360—W. Simonson

Elfquest 3—W.&R. Pini

Secret Wars II 4—Shooter; Milgrom, Leialoha

Transformers 9—Budiansky; Johnson, Joyce

Star Wars 100—Duffy; Martin

Marvel Team-Up Index 1—Olshevsky

Doctor Who 13

Alien Legion 9—Zelenetz, Warner; Portacio

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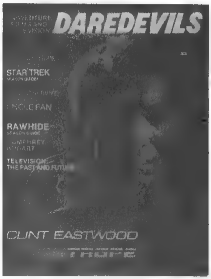

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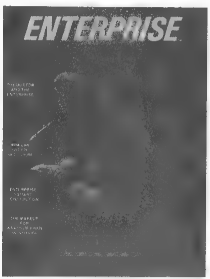

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NEWS AND ANALYSIS
BY HAL SCHUSTER

Smaller independent comic book publishers must compete with the industry giants if they hope to stay in business. However, smaller print runs mean higher printing costs which in turn lead to higher cover prices. And it's hard to compete while charging more. But the solution to this dilemma may be at hand.

Marvel Comics knows that they have an edge. And it is one that DC and Archie share—not quite as strongly, but just about. In the latest **Marvel Age** (cover date July), there is a section parodying their normal listing of upcoming releases as an April Fool's joke. For the definition of "A Direct Sales" title they offer, "title usually costs more". This joke hits very close to the truth. In fact, to almost a dozen independent comic book companies it's really not very funny at all.

For this is the real vulnerability of the independent comic book publishers. They do not enjoy print runs even approaching those of the comic book publishers that offer their wares to both specialty and mass markets—publishers such as Marvel, DC and Archie. As a result the titles offered by the independent publishers and sold only to the specialty market, tend to cost much more than similar books from Marvel, DC and Archie. If a Marvel comic book is 65¢ and a DC 75¢ then a First comic in the same format will be $1.25. Most of the independent publishers have avoided the direct comparison by only producing Baxter or similar paper offerings and skipping the newsprint format entirely. They will tell you that it is because they desire a higher quality package. Don't believe it. They do it because they simply cannot afford to compete. That means that they are reduced to charging $1.50, $1.75 or even $2.00 for their comic books. Quite expensive when compared to a 65¢ comic book.

The quality of the books offered by the independent publishers such as Eclipse, First and the others is often high. But it is really nothing that the mass market publishers cannot offer. DC has **Swamp Thing** which does not carry the comic book code seal of authority and offers "sophisticated suspence" and Marvel has quite a variety including **Elfquest, Groo** and **Dreadstar** along with their normal line. The pool of talent which the companies draw from is the same. None of the independent publishers have really developed any secret reservoir of creators unknown to the others, and there are few if any creators working for the independents that are not willing to work for Marvel (or Epic) or DC.

All of this puts the independents in a really tough position. How do you convince a reader to purchase one of your books at several times the price of a comic book available from another publisher if there is really nothing significantly different about it? Can you really ask someone to pay more simply because you choose to market in a more limited fashion?

The solution is very simple but difficult to accomplish. You try to find cheaper methods of doing what you are doing so that you can afford to make a real reduction in price. That means that you have to find an area where costs can be cut. The costs involved in producing a comic book break down into several specific areas: the cost of overhead, the cost of distribution, the editorial package and the cost of production. Most alternative publishers operate on a shoestring with a very small staff and well outside of prime rent locations. Overhead is rock bottom—far less than that paid by the major comic book companies. The cost of distribution—shipping, discounts to distributors, etc.—are fixed and cannot really be reduced. Editorial costs are equally difficult to change since everyone is competing for the same talent and must offer competitive rates. The last area, production costs, is the one which is approachable. This divides into two basic costs, color separations and printing. Separations, which enable a page to be printed in color, are about as cheap as they are going to get in the near future. But if printing, the single greatest cost for almost all publications, can be changed, then something major can be accomplished. And this may happen.

The front page of the April 5, 1985 **The Comic Buyers Guide** bears the following headline: "European printing plan may lower comics cost". The article, bylined by Howard W. Strangroom, goes on to say, "Dez Skinn (of Quality Comics)...is apparently in a position to offer a deal whereby comics will be printed in Europe by offset lithography onto high-quality paper and shipped to the states, for much less than it would cost to print the same books in the United States." Supposedly this miracle will be accomplished by virtue of an arrangement that Skinn has made with a European printing pool. He has already journeyed to New York to meet with several of the independent comic book publishers and industry consultant Mike Friedrich, a former direct sales manager of Marvel Comics, will be sending out a letter offering the new arrangement to all American independent publishers.

If this system actually works and accomplishes the task it is designed to handle, then this is a very major breakthrough in assisting smaller publishers to compete with Marvel and DC. For the first time they will be on a competitive footing to offer their product at reasonable prices. And the reader will be able to purchase their wares without straining his pocketbook.

STRIP SEARCH

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

DICK TRACY — THE FLETCHER YEARS
PART TWO

In a previous issue of **COMICS FEATURE** I began a look back at my collaboration with artist Rick Fletcher on the DICK TRACY comic strip. Rick had been TRACY-creator Chester Gould's assistant, and had worked on the strip for sixteen years before taking over the art completely. A life-long TRACY fan, I had published a number of mystery novels, but had never before written comics. Together, we did DICK TRACY from December 1977 into June of 1983. I have continued on with Dick Locher, the Pulitzer Prize-winning political cartoonist who had preceded Fletcher as Gould's assistant. What follows (as well as the preceding installment of this column) does not pretend to be a portrait of Rick Fletcher; rather, it's a personal guided tour of the work Rick and I did together.

Rick Fletcher studied police techniques and equipment to insure accuracy in DICK TRACY.

Who reads DICK TRACY?

Sometimes Rick Fletcher and I would wonder if **anybody** was out there, reading what we were doing. We each worked in our solitary studios, hundreds of miles apart, me in Muscatine, Iowa, he in Woodstock, Illinois—rarely interacting in-person with each other, let alone the general public. (Early on we met quite regularly, then it settled into once-or-twice-a-year luncheon meets at Woodstock or Chicago.)

So it always comes as a surprise to me (as I know it did to Rick) when someone who meets me in a social situation suddenly knows all about Art Dekko and Sue Reel, or Breakdown or Willie Wheeler, and wants to know what's going to happen next. I never can answer that, and not for reasons of secrecy. During my collaboration with Rick, I worked 16 weeks ahead and he 3; today I've fallen back to about 13 weeks ahead. And, unless I've just glanced over the paper, I don't remember what's going on in the current strip—I'm deep into the next story.

As for who reads TRACY, judging from the mail and newspaper polls (the latter being one of the most fallible of "sciences"), the answer is "kids from 8 to 80." During the first year I worked on the strip, I was struck by the two groups that seemed to send the most mail: the 10 to 13 year-old group, just discovering TRACY; and adults from 40 to, well, 80, who had been reading TRACY long before I was born.

How can you write a comic strip for kids and grown-ups at the same time? I have no definitive answer, but I know the approach that seems to work for me: I try to write the story on a basic, adventure/suspense level for the kids; and do some tongue-in-cheek, more sophisticated things for the adults to pick up on.

For instance—Sue Reel, the beautiful blonde with the Salvadore Dali mustache. Adults see that "Sue Reel" is a pun on "surreal" and make the Dali connection, accordingly. To the kids, it's: "Look at the crazy lady with the mustache!" (And both the reactions are, at heart, the same reaction.) Similarly, Art Dekko is to kids a funny-looking little guy with big ears and a tux; to adults, he's a character out of John Held, Jr., connecting Art Dekko to art deco.

The Art Dekko/Sue Reel story was based, partially, on the famous Chicago Art Institute heist of several years before. I was worried somebody at the Institute would complain; instead, several employees—including their security chief, who requested (and got) an original from Rick Fletcher—wrote fan letters about the story. The **Chicago Reader**, a big circulation **Village Voice**-style paper, wrote a nice story about us, too. Incidentally, Rick's portrayal of Johnny Adonis—who was later to become a regular in the strip—was based on a real-life NYC art cop, Robert Volpe, who discussed the TRACY art heist story on the NICKELODEAN cable channel.

The "Breakdown" story got us into **Time** magazine (due to the corporate kidnapping aspect of the continuity)

Dick Tracy and visuals accompanying this article are © 1985 Chicago Tribune Syndicate

GOTTA RUN FOR IT— HE'LL NEVER HIT A MOVING TARGET IN THE DARK...
6-6-80
HALT OR I'LL FIRE, DEKKO!
TRY, COP, TRY!!!
RATATAT-
1 ON THE RUN, DEKKO SPRAYS BULLETS AT THE FRONT DOOR, KNOWING IT WILL BE GUARDED...
RATATAFTAT...
6-7-80
2 IN THE DARKNESS, TRACY TAKES HIS SIGHT-PICTURE...
3 DIDN'T EXPECT TO BE TESTING MY NIGHT-SIGHT UNDER COMBAT CONDITIONS, BUT IF THAT'S THE WAY DEKKO WANTS IT..."

A sequence in which Tracy tested the Night-Sight against a machinegun toting Art Dekko.

and marked the first time blacks were used in the strip, in a nonstereotypical manner. Black policewoman Lee Ebony, introduced in that continuity, was, of course, named in tribute to Will Eisner's character Ebony.

After Art Dekko, Sue Reel and Breakdown—villains that all had a comical touch—I decided to do a genuinely evil villain: Torcher—to reflect the seriousness of the real-life crime of inner city arson. I think Rick Fletcher out did himself on the design of Torcher, who may be the best villain we did together.

Doing TRACY in the '80s

When I was a kid, reading DICK TRACY, I always thought Junior Tracy would grow up to marry Sparkle Plenty. When I was a grown-up kid, and saw Chet Gould marry Junior off to Moon Maid, and Sparkle off to Vera Alldid, I was disappointed. I always felt that Vera Alldid came to hold the position in the strip that was rightfully Junior's; and that Moon Maid, once Chet finished the sequences directly related to the moon, was an awkward reminder of outer space in the urban world of DICK TRACY. So when Rick Fletcher and I took over for Chet, I put my plan into motion: get rid of Vera and Moon Maid; and slowly bring Junior and Sparkle together.

Because of that, the "B.U. Tiffil" continuity had soap opera overtones, and there was less action in it than I liked. I was getting itchy (to drop a name) to do some tough action, and hoped the younger readers wouldn't be put off by the "mushy stuff." Even Chet Gould, who had been my consultant on the strip through the first four years, publicly complained about the soap opera aspects.

In the midst of this came the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, flap: an editor, there, dropped the strip with great fanfare, proclaiming TRACY existed solely to promote and glorify violence. The story got on the wire services, and the national nightly tv news broadcasts, and Rick and I spent weeks talking to interviewers and reporters about the problem of "too much violence" in DICK TRACY.

The climax of the "B.U. Teffil" story involves some gunplay, and action; but this action comes at the end of the story, and is necessary for more reasons than I'd care to go into. But it had the unfortunate fate to be printed in the papers during the period when the papers were full of the Pope being the unsuccessful target of an assassin's bullets—and we took criticism for being tasteless. If this were the case, Rick Fletcher and I had the distinction of being psychicly tasteless, since we worked four months in advance of publication.

The frustration of doing DICK TRACY in 1981 was that the two criticisms we most often heard were: the strip lacks action (i.e., violence); and the strip is too violent (i.e., has too much action).

DICK TRACY villains exhibit exaggerated characteristics.

The effort to tie topical matters into the stories continued in the "B.U.Tef-fil" story, which had a Bo Derek/John Derek-style couple at its center. That story also marked the first time Rick and I tackled B.O.Plenty and Gravel Gertie at length and it's unusual, perhaps, in that its villain, Pushy, does not reveal himself as such till well into the story.

The "Ownley Chylde" continuity was about the collector mentality run amok. I had the story in the works when that person (whose name I refuse to remember) shot John Lennon; and it occured to me that this person—who had loved the Beatles and idolized Lennon—was the ultimate John Lennon collector: he collected Lennon. In a less violent, but similarly creepy manner, Ownley Chylde is the Sparkle Plenty collector who seeks to collect Sparkle Plenty. As a collector myself, I have often felt there was a sickness at the root of collecting—sometimes harmless, sometimes got-out-of-hand.

An only child wrote me, incidentally, complaining about my blackening the name of **all** only children via this character; it was obvious, this reader said, that the insensitive lout who wrote this tripe had many siblings and did not understand the **true** only child mentality. Well, the insensitive lout who wrote it is an only child himself....

The "Ownley Chylde" story also included some crime prevention sequences—with the cooperation of the Crime Prevention Coalition, who were thrilled to have TRACY's blessing—and the Iowa State Fair was actually going on when the Iowa State Fair was appearing in the strip. (Rick being, like me, an Iowa native, by the way.) There really is a Hall of Law Enforcement, like the one pictured in that continuity, where throughout the Fair, a TRACY exhibit of memorabilia and original Gould and Fletcher art was on display (and so was I, for two days).

The brief story in which The Mole resurfaces served to launch a series of interconnecting stories having to do with the 50th Anniversary of the DICK TRACY strip. That anniversary attracted considerable attention: articles in national magazines, such as **US**; handfulls of wire service stories; appearances by Chet, Rick and me on the nightly national news shows. Between us, Rick and I did over 50 phone interviews in one month; and I flew to NYC for appearances on **To Tell the Truth** and **Good Morning America**. But we never lost track of one thing: DICK TRACY was the star.

Rick and I had a lot of fun with the 50th Anniversary story, in which a death threat to Tracy opens the door for the return of a multitude of TRACY villains (among them, Pearshape, Influence, Mousy and Coffyhead). It was a busy story—Lizz is kidnapped, feared dead; Diet Smith's labs make a breakthrough in nuclear fusion; Smith and Tracy tour the country promoting FUSION NOW; various attempts are made on Diet's life; all culminating—finally—in the marriage of Junior and Sparkle. The mystery villain of the piece is revealed as Angeltop, who has planted a bomb in the church where the ceremony is taking place, hoping to blow Tracy and all his relatives to kingdom come. (She fails, incidentally.)

The Final Year

The last year or so of my collaboration with Rick was perhaps the most satisfying, artistically. We were never close friends, and sometimes weeks would go by without our even speaking on the phone; but our work meshed. And the final continuities were—and this is an opinion I think Rick would share—among our best.

We dealt with another topical crime—video piracy—in the form of Splitscreen, a villain who lives his life entirely in front of (and according to)

I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU MAN AND WIFE—
YOU MAY KISS THE BRIDE.
RICK FLETCHER/MAX COLLINS
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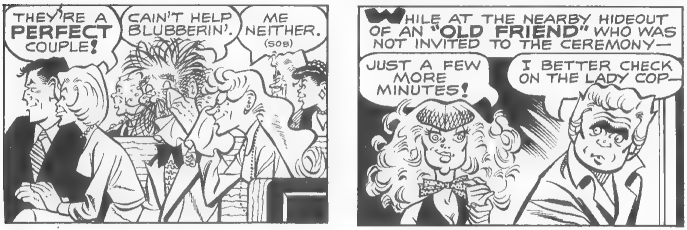
Collins and Fletcher brought Junior Tracy and Sparkle Plenty together in holy matrimony.


THEY'RE A PERFECT COUPLE!
CAIN'T HELP BLUBBERIN'.
ME NEITHER. (SOB)
WHILE AT THE NEARBY HIDEOUT OF AN "OLD FRIEND" WHO WAS NOT INVITED TO THE CEREMONY—
JUST A FEW MORE MINUTES!
I BETTER CHECK ON THE LADY COP—

WHAT —WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SHUT UP. I'M LETTING YOU GO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?
4/25/82
YOU CAN CRAWL OUT A BASEMENT WINDOW—THE CHURCH IS ONLY A COUPLE BLOCKS FROM HERE— YOU HAVE TO WARN THEM!"
TICK
TICK

his tv, with breaks only to go to the john. He exercises with Richard Simmons, eats tv dinners while watching sitcoms (which he inevitably found uproarious) and falls asleep in his chair during the national anthem. However, Splitscreen (one of Rick's best-designed villains, I feel) meets his match in Ida Jury, a twisted housewife whose husband had been killed by a young punk who got off on an insanity plea—for having viewed too much television! (The latter was an actual defense, a while back, that got some publicity). Dressing as a Carrie Nation type, Ida becomes Auntie Freedom, and destroys tvs much as the Computer Killer "killed" computers. She and Splitscreen finally collide and crash, and Tracy, Sam and Lizz pick up the pieces.

It occured to me that Chet had never

Auntie Freedom and Splitscreen were very colorful mortal enemies.

really done a traditional whodunit. In TRACY—imagine that, the world's most famous detective had never solved a "real" mystery! We set that straight, by "almost" killing Pat Patton. The powers-that-be at the syndicate vetoed my wish to kill off this major character—I thought the impact would be worth the loss of Pat—so Chief Patton went into the temporary limbo of a coma (not an uncommon place for a character in TRACY to end up).

The attempt on Chief Patton's life comes as the aftermath of his having announced his retirement—and his plan to write a book exposing political corruption as it had tainted the police department. Deputy Chief Climer refuses to allow Tracy to work on the Patton case, so Tracy quits the force, opening up an office as a private eye, while tracking down Pat's would-be killer.

The suspects included Kasper Hackett (a ghost writer), Astral Turf (a green-haired psychic), Johnny Adonis (kicked off the force for supposed corruption) and Deputy Chief Climer (don't tell anybody, but he did it). We concluded the tale with what Rick and I felt was our best death trap: Tracy is tied behind the figure of Flattop in a "Hogan's Alley" firing range, while rookie cops (unaware of Tracy's presence) shoot at the 3-D targets.

Incidentally, use of the 3-D targets was Rick's idea—he kept an eye out for such real-life police items. Earlier examples of Rick's keen eye for modern hardware were the depiction of soft body armor in the 50th Anniversary story, and the Nite-Sight attachment to Tracy's .357 mag that allowed him to shoot it out in the dark with a tommygun-wielding Art Dekko.

The final Fletcher story was one we referred to as "The Ghost of Itchy." It involved a hoax perpetrated by the late Itchy's brother, Twitchy (a new character), in league with the late B.B.Eyes' brother B.D.Eyes. Together they attempt to scare horror novelist Stephanie Queen out of the already spooky house she's just bought; seems the dead Itchy's stash of stolen cash is hidden somewhere in that house. Twitchy, a photography buff, uses holograms to fake the "ghost" of his late brother, but ghostbuster Tracy double-exposes Twitchy and B.D.Eyes.

Rick said he enjoyed doing the Ghost of Itchy story very much—it was one of his favorites of our stories; possibly his very favorite. He always brought great vitality to the strip, but this story has a special flair. The villains and Stephanie Queen are wonderful visual creations. During these last months, Rick's body was tragically sick, hopelessly weak; but his imagination and his pen were as nimble and alive as ever.

He stayed at his drawing board till the very end; he drew his last strips on Friday, went into the hospital Saturday, died the following Wednesday. He had drawn the first few Sunday pages of the next story (in which Junior's daughter Honey starts a Crimestoppers Club) and finished up all but the last week of dailies of the "Ghost of Itchy" story.

I'm proud of the work Rick Fletcher and I did together. His legacy is his work. Since I provided him with words for five years, perhaps I can be so bold as to provide him an epitaph as well; anyway, it's one I think he'd approve of.

RICK FLETCHER WAS A REAL PRO.

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LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

By Ron Goulart

ODDS & ENDS PART THREE

Although dozens of new comic book titles bravely assaulted the newsstands in the boom years of the early 1940s, a goodly portion didn't succeed. In our third and last roundup of odds and ends we'll consider some more of these noble failures.

MIRACLE

Hillman Periodicals eventually came up with some fairly successful magazines—among these **Airboy** and **Real Clue.** Their earliest efforts, however, were far from being hits. **Miracle Comics** emerged early in 1940 and took over a year to get to its fourth and final issue. Considering its contents, only a miracle could've made this a success. While there were several costumed heroes to be found in its pages, there wasn't one who had star quality. A dull, redsuited fellow known as Sky Wizard led off each issue. "Aided by the miracles of science he had produced in his laboratory, Sky Wizard, Master of Space, has dedicated his life and the life of his servant, Keeshan, to the destruction of organized crime," is how a caption explained him. Although SW smashed at least one evil genius each and every issue, "always some new criminal mastermind arises to challenge his power." In a typical adventure Sky Wizard and Keeshan, a bearded and turbaned chap, overcome Howland, a mad scientist who's been using robots to perform bank robberies and other evil deeds.

SKY WIZARD
MASTER of SPACE
AIDED BY THE MIRACL
MASTER OF SPACE, HAS D
HIS LIFE AND THE LIFE OF HI
ANT, KEESHAN, TO THE DEST
ION OF ORGANIZED CRIME
ONE BY ONE HE SMASHES THE
EVIL GENIUSES OF THE UNDE
WORLD, BUT ALWAYS SOME NEW
CRIMINAL MASTER-MIND AR
TO CHALLENGE HIS POWER
Sky Wizard was the lead hero in Miracle Comics, published by Hillman Periodicals.

Miracle's other superman was Dash Dixon, whose tight green paramilitary uniform and black skullcap made him look like a gay bellboy. Dash came by his powers because he permitted a noted scientist to use "perpetual life rays" on him—"One injection of these rays will normally render Dash immune to death for as long as twenty-four hours, during which time his physical powers are increased tremendously." The doctor's rays apparently come in liquid form, since we are shown them being shot into Dash's body via a hypo.

Rounding out the magazine's far from all-star cast were Secret Agent K-7, the Veiled Prophet, cowboy Bill Colt and, in the last issue, Bullet Bob. A plainclothes scientific adventurer, Bob was drawn by Jack Burnley, who also worked on more winning characters such as Starman, Superman and Batman.

O.K. Comics, published by an outfit calling itself Hit Publications, Inc., also arrived in 1940. The first issue, dated July, introduced a dozen new characters. The lead off spot went to a muscular, redheaded lad called Little Giant. An orphan newsboy by trade, he was described as being "as strong as a dozen grown men...also immune to physical harm and wears a special antigravity suit." He owed his abilities to yet another maverick scientist, one Professor Rednow (wonder spelled backwards). His immunity to physical harm was due to the professor's coating his body with impurvogen. A feisty lad, he took no back talk from crook or cop. When a policeman tried to keep him back from the scene of a fire, the Little Giant broke the guy's nightstick, stripped down to his crimson anti-gravity suit and went scooting up a fire ladder to rescue a blonde and her three puppies. Later he brought the arsonist, who was also a dangerous radical, to justice after first vowing, "We've gotta stop his clock!" Little Giant was the work of Adolphe Barreaux and the entire contents of **O.K.** was the product of Majestic Studios, a shop he ran at the time.

Among the book's other characters were Sunset Smith, a cowboy drawn by Charles M. Quinlan; the Phantom Knight, a fellow who did his good deeds during the crusades; Mr. Mist, an invisible man. Also drawn by Quinlan, this last one didn't come along until

issue 2. We learn that Roy Gates, after surviving a monoplane crash in the snowy mountains of India, is taught the secret of invisibility by a kindly high priest. The closing panel shows Roy, plane repaired, flying off into the sunset—"endowed with the powerful magic and mystery of the East...to pit his strength against the forces of evil and destruction!" Unfortunately, since there was never a third issue, Roy didn't get a chance to put his new knack to work.

C-M-O

C-M-O Comics, one of the few magazines ever that was part funnies and part catalogue, appeared twice in 1942. It was produced for the Chicago Mail Order Company by Centaur Comics just before that organization breathed its last. Originally intended as a giveaway, some copies of **C-M-O** did find their way to the stands. More sedate and sobersided than such Centaur efforts as **Amazing Man**, the book did offer a couple of mild superheroes. There was Plymo, a moustached rubberstamp of Plastic Man—"the only living man who can absorb vucanalia into his body to make it pliable as rubber." A little uneasy with his gift, Plymo worked as a freak in a traveling circus. The invisible Terror was a young man who could turn transparent after guzzling a solution cooked up by maverick scientist Dr. Cordell. Since the C.M.O. folks were interested in selling drygoods while entertaining you, almost every page of every story was footnoted with copy and drawings plugging the clothes and accessories they had to offer—"Tom's good-looking clocked socks are no. 6 MJ60, page 307 in the C.M.O. catalog." "The shirt Nancy wears under her sweater is our superb shirt blouse, no. BD57-058." My favorite plug accompanies a drawing of the scientist dying after a heart seizure—"Dr. Cortell's luxurious pajamas appear in the C.M.O. catalog on page 321." The veteran artist Homer Fleming drew the Invisible Terror. Bob Lubbers rendered "Star Spangled" Branner, about an ordinary smalltown boy who "valiently (sic) slashes at the alien forces trying to cripple our country from within." He also drew **The Mystery of the Old Well**, a Nancy Drew-Hardy Boys sort of thing. In this one you get marginal commercials for lamps, clocks and tables as well as clothing. In his book **Some of My Best Friends Are Writers, But I Wouldn't Want My Daughter To Marry One** (1970), mystery and

Dash Dixon was Miracle Comics other superman.

television writer Robert Turner confessed to having written some of the scripts for this particular magazine.

BLAZING

Although produced by Funnies, Inc., the same shop that provided art and editorial for **Marvel Mystery, Target** and **Blue Bolt, Blazing Comics** was not a winner. It first appeared in the spring of 1944 and expired, after five issues, early in 1945. **Blazing** did, though, give to the world one of the most unusual costumed heroes of the World War II years—the Green Turtle. Drawn and possibly written by an artist named Chu Hing, the strip had the Turtle aiding the Chinese in guerilla warfare against the Japanese invaders. A real mystery man, he wore a green cowl and a cloak that had an enormous turtle shell design emblazoned on it. Since we rarely see the hero's face—not because of his halfmask, but because he usually keeps his back to the camera—it's possible that Hing intended him to be Chinese, even though the colorist gave him a pink skin. He was aided by a sidekick called Burma Boy and flew a turtlish rocket plane.

In addition **Blazing** offered a magician detective known as Mr. Ree (if he were around today I'd be tempted to introduce him to Ms. Tree), a white goddess called Jun-Gal and an American Indian fighter pilot named Red Hawk. There was also a swashbuckling Black Buccaneer, rendered by a youthful Leonard Starr.

CANNONBALL

The outfit that eventually became the American Comics Group tried an adventure title early in 1945. **Cannonball Comics** made it through just two issues before expiring. A redheaded boy crimefighter was the star of this one, too. Wearing a green tunic, yellow cape and grey hipboots, he operated under the name of the Crash Kid. In everyday life he was the copy boy at a large metropolitan newspaper. Since the Crash Kid had not one single superpower, he had to depend on his wits and agility to combat and catch crooks. The dependable Bob Oksner drew the feature. Oksner also did the Crime Crusader—"a NEW type of detective folks...fast-thinking, hard-punching, devil-may-care Jonathan Jones." Private eye Jones worked with a pudgy boy sidekick named Kewple O'Toole and his cases had workable, if somewhat familiar, mystery plots.

Cannonball also housed Hardy of Hillsdale High and Thunderbird, which dealt with a boy adventurer who mingled with thieves, slavers and pirates in a medieval setting. At least I assume it was the Middle Ages, the copy referred to the period only as "long ago".

Next time around we'll consider what happened when **The Saturday Evening Post** folks got together with the likes of Bill Everett, Simon & Kirby and the incomparable Basil Wolverton to turn out comic books.

Blazing Comics was produced by Funnies, Inc. and published by Enwill Associates.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

OH LORD, I HURT SO BAD! I'VE GOT TO GET MYSELF TO SOME HOSPITAL! I'VE GOT TO GET SOME BODY TO HELP ME! AND THEN THEY'LL HAVE TO HELP!
SUDDENLY, SPIDER-WOMAN'S SPIDER-SENSE WARNS HER OF DANGER! SHE WHIRLS AROUND TO...
SPIDER-WOMAN'S AFRAID!
HE'S STILL LUMBERING ALONG... OBLIVIOUS TO MY WEB GOOP!
GOT YOU!
HE'S STRONG!
BUT SOMEONE WHOSE ENRAGED STRENGTH IS EQUAL TO SPIDER-WOMAN'S!
HOLD HIM... WHILE I SHOOT ONE FIVE-FOOT-LONG WEB-ROPE RIGHT INTO!

my interview by inquiring if we might expect, possibly next year, a **Secret Wars III**. "Even if I knew the answer I probably couldn't tell you," he told me. "But I don't know."

Curious as to how a specific writer might go about integrating his book into the **Secret Wars** II grand design, I next checked in with my old chum Archie Goodwin. In addition to his various **Epic** chores, Archie's now scripting **Dazzler**. My opening polite query as to how he was, brought forth the response, "Oh, a little harassed and harried. But I guess I say that every time you call." When does Dazzler get her turn? "One issue, **Dazzler** 40, will interface." That will match up with the events in **Secret Wars** II 4.

Goodwin already has his end of it worked out. I asked him how he was briefed as to his part in all this. "Essentially what we did was the **Dazzler** editor and associate editor and I and Jim Shooter all went to lunch. And, you know, Jim sort of filled me in on what he was doing with the character and things like that. Then leaving it up to me as to how to work it into my book." He hadn't as yet seen a copy of the master chart Budiansky mentioned. "They may not have made up my part of it yet."

As to his feelings on being recruited to take part in the latest Secret Wars battles: "I went through a few moments of stage fright," he admits. "Because of having to use somebody else's

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SECRET WARS II
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3
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02831
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WHAT THE--?
I HAVE TELEPATHICALLY GLEANED THIS INFORMATION FROM INDIVIDUALS THOUGHT YOU REFER TO AS "DAZZLER" -- YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT!
HE HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN ALTERED BY OUR MENACING VISITORS!
YOU ARE ALONE NOW!
I AM THE LEADER OF THIS TEAM!
THAT'S RIGHT!
I KNOW YOU COULD!
IF I HADN'T SEEN THE BEYONDER DESTROY MY FRIENDS, I WOULD'VE THOUGHT DAZZLER'S ERASURE WAS A BIG MISTAKE!
WHAT ARE WE TO DO?
DO IT, MAN! DO SOMETHING!
YOU JOINED THE OFFICIAL WAR AGAINST THE BEYONDER! NOW YOU WILL DIE WITH US! I AM NOT AFRAID! I FACE THE FUTURE WITH HONOR!
I'M SO ALONE! I'VE NEVER FELT SO SMALL! SO INSIGNIFICANT!
I'M SCARED! I'M SCARED!
LISTEN TO ME, BOY! WE'VE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH A SACRED DUTY! WE'RE GOING TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE! HERE AND IN THE FUTURE!
HOW FLEMME IS IT, ALBEIT TIME TRAVEL IS INVOLVED?
OOH, BLOOD!
I'LL TAKE THE MIDDLE ONE, BATMAN!
YOU MUST BE CAREFUL, MAGNUS! MISFORTUNES AND THE SAME OF EVENTIDE IS NOT HYDE
I LET US GET ON WITH IT, RAVEN!

character and things like that. A character like the Beyonder, a powerful character who's going through changes and development. I found that a little tricky to get into." How did he see the Beyonder? "Well, I interpret him as an incredibly powerful alien being, who is essentially learning what it's like to be human and live on Earth." The Beyonder's quest for enlightenment will cause him to "travel all around" and when his path crosses that of Dazzler she'll be "somewhere around the Colorado-Arizona area."

...THE WRITER...

Jim Shooter I've known casually for several years. We've bumped into each other at comics conventions and a couple of years ago, when he was suffering from the temporary delusion that some of my science fiction novels could be turned into Marvel graphic novels, I had a few meetings and a lunch with him. He is one of the tallest editors I've ever dealt with—when you're five foot four, as I am, almost all your editors, including many of the lady ones, tend to be taller than you—and even when I talk with him over the telephone, as I did for this interview, I get the feeling he's towering over me.

In a piece in **COMICS FEATURE** last year Shooter was quoted as saying that while there was a possibility of a sequel to the **Secret Wars** series he was then working on, he didn't want to write it himself. He was hoping to get DeFalco to script because "this is killing me." We began our chat by discussing why Shooter had changed his mind and was writing the new series. Shooter led gradually to his reasons for assuming the second series. "I'm not trying to be greedy here," he began. "The whole thing was my idea and I did the first one because I

AND ELSEWHERE IN THE MARVEL COMPLEX...
AT LAST! GALACTUS' ULTIMATE FOE, THE LURKING HERO... NO MORE THAN A WORLD!
AS HE PLANS BECOME CLEAR TO ME, SO DO MY OWN PLANS CRYSTALLIZE!
TIMING WILL BE CRITICAL!
ATTENTION, GENTLEMEN OF DOOM! PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR BATTLE! FROM THIS MOMENT ON, YOU ARE ALL TO BE ALERT! YOU WILL BE READY TO STRIKE AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE!
HAIL, ME! AND YOU SHALL BE OFFERED SYCOPHANTICALLY!
DOOM! I WOULD THAT A WORD WITH YOU!
MY ORDERS STAND! CEASE CHEAP CAMARADERIE! YOU WOULD DO WELL TO CHERISH YOUR SEPARATION!
YOU CANNOT DECEIVE ME, DOOM! I SENSE THE ODDS AGAINST US...AND I AM AFRAID!
LOOK AT ME, VICTOR VON DOOM! I AM A GODDESS—BEAUTIFUL! I AM A GODDESS—POWERFUL! I MUST BE A GODDESS—FRUSTRATED! WHAT I'D GIVE FOR A MAN WHO'D KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH ONE!
YOU'RE RAVISHING! I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A FINE FIGURE OF A WOMAN! I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH A FINE FIGURE OF ANYTHING! IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING SO, YOU'RE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN I'VE EVER SEEN!
NOW WOMAN! YOU LIKE ME! YOU LOVE ME! YOU WILL DO WHAT I SAY! YOU WILL HELP ME!
I WOULD NOT!
IF MY BEAUTY IS SOLELY ENOUGH FOR YOU, THEN YOU ARE A LOW-BORN CHEAP SKATE!
I COULD REGAIN MY SCARS YOU STOOD BEHIND YOUR IRON MASK!
MY FACE—! YOU COULD RESTORE MY FACE?!!
EASILY!

felt I was the only one who really could do it. It involved all the Marvel characters and there were two problems. First of all you need someone who's qualified to write all those Marvel characters. And that's me. I mean, by definition I'm Jim Henson and these are the Muppets. The other thing was, it would involve massive co-ordination. And it had to be somebody that they all at least had to be polite to." Shooter says he felt on the first series that had one of the other writers done the script he might've run into opposition. As to the second series. "After I did the first twelve," he said, "that was enough for me for awhile. And I thought it's time to pass this on to someone else and let them have a plum. Because it really is a fantastically successful series." The first series had done much better than even Shooter had anticipated. In terms of sales "we blew the X-Men out of the water. By a huge margin." And unlike some series, the later issues sold even better than the first. There turned out, however, to be a problem in passing on the plum. "I was thinking of passing the thing to DeFalco...but Tom's writing **Amazing Spiderman**. He's busy himself and he didn't want to give that up. He couldn't handle both. That really just left me. Everyone else who's at all qualified is busy elsewhere anyway."

Shooter has the general outline of the whole new series worked out fairly specifically. When I asked him why **Secret Wars** II ran to nine episodes rather than twelve, he answered, "Because that's how many it will take to do the story." Since he's pretty much running the show up at Marvel, I wondered how he fit the scriptwriting into an already crowded work schedule. "Well, I've been doing this for twenty years now and I've gotten relatively fast at it," he said. "My biggest problem is finding a block of

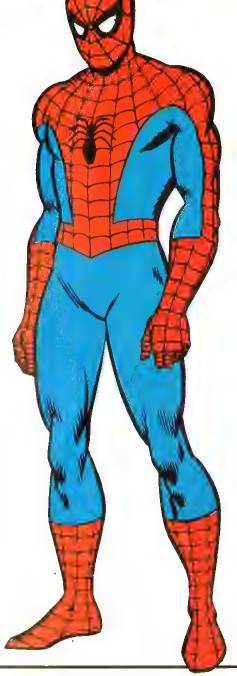
time to devote to it. Usually I find that on weekends. I guess you know that eight one hour blocks of time don't equal one eight hour block. Once I get rolling, though, it comes fairly quickly. And I do the best I can do, whatever that is."

He next talked about co-ordinating all the titles. "Each issue will involve three or more Marvel titles," he says. "There's a couple of months when it'll be three only, most often it's four and there'll be a couple of months when it goes to five or six." He and Budiansky have "been sitting in with every editor and every team up and down the hallway. Plotting the scripts of **Secret Wars** issues and plotting with them on the crossover issues. There'd been, according to Shooter, little or no trouble. "It's worked out pretty smoothly. And, of course, if in the process somebody has an idea that'll influence the direction of my own plot, I use it. Very organic. I don't dictate to these guys and I think everyone here feels they have a lot of latitude."

I now asked for some specifics on the new **Secret Wars**. "Well, the sequel was planned from the beginning," answered Shooter. "When I wrote the original three or four page treatment for the first series, the sequel was planned within that document. Naturally, if it had been a disaster, we wouldn't have had the sequel." He talked about the Beyonder. "He comes to Earth and sort of explores further what he was interested in in the first series. See, he comes from a universe where there is nothing but him, he's all there is. In our universe he can know everything, because he's got godlike omniscience. But knowing isn't necessarily comprehending. And coming from a universe where there's only this complete unity and coming to one where there's a multiplicity and diversity—it's boggling to him."

Shooter also settled the question of what the Beyonder is. "He's god with a

NO... BEN WAS RIGHT. HE WORE TROMEO SOCIALLY, BUT WANTED THAN ANYTHING... FREEDOM!
BUT I ARE RICHARDS! I'M PROUD OF HELPING ABOUT HOW BRILLIANT YOU ARE, AND HOW NOW BRILLIANT STRANGE IS—! DO YOU MIND IF I ASK YOU WHAT'S BUGGING YOU THIS TIME IS PISS UP WITH THAT DAMSHAW?
WELL, THAT'S EXACTLY THE KIND OF BULLSHIT I'M REFERRING WE SPEECH FROM. YOU ARE... OR DOCTOR STRANGE, OR WHOEVER YOU ARE! I'M NOT A CHILD! YOU SEE A BEAST... KEEP USING YOUR MUSCLE THAT'S ALL YOU'RE GOOD FOR!
WHY YOU—! YOU ARROGANT HUMAN! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOSING MY INTELLECT IS. YOU'D HAD YOU THINK I'M JUST A DUMB OX AGAIN! I WILL SMASH YOU! I WILL SMASH EVERYTHING!
—BUT YOU BETTER PUSH YOUR STUFF IN, BE CAUSE I'M GETTING OUT OUT OF HERE I'M GOING TO EAT YOU APART!
CAPTAIN MARVEL, JOHNNY! I'VE ADAPTED! BEN WAS RIGHT! I'M STRONGER TO THINK! I CAN FREELY CHOOSE! I'M ELECTRIC TO USE POWER FROM WITHIN! I'M MAKING MY TRANSFER!
CONCENTRATE—JOHNNY, CHANNEL YOUR NARAYAN NOW! I'LL SAVE HER! THE MOLECULE MAN! CAPTAIN MARVEL! WITH THE FULL FORCE OF MY DIRECTED MAGNETIC GRAVITATION!
HEH—I CAN FEEL THESE POWER POUCH I'M BORN TO HAVE! IT'S UN-STOPPA! BEHEMOTH!
WOAH! SOMETHING'S TRYING! HONEST! IT'S COMING FROM THAT DIRECTION!
FULL FORCE REPULSION! BEN AND MARY WATCH! NOW!!
KITHOOOM!



small 'g'. And certainly the most powerful and omnipotent character that we've ever worked with." As to the metaphysical elements in the saga, Shooter says, "The story has a lot of my own personal philosophy and so forth, a lot of my thinking. I don't know how it could not. But I try not to be heavyhanded with it, try to do it fairly subtly. A lot of the philosophical base for **Secret Wars** comes from **The Bible**. If you remember back in the Sixties all the slogans like 'God is dead.' Well, change that to, 'God forgot us.' What if he suddenly found us again? Then how would he feel about this stuff? So in **Secret Wars** there's a very similar situation, with this godlike being."

I mentioned that all this was something that wouldn't have been going on in the Marvel comics of my distant youth. "I don't think there's any subject we dare not touch," responded Shooter. "I feel like we can tell any story as long as it's a good story."

Naturally I was curious about that hunk of Denver, Colorado that was last seen floating out in space. It was allegedly enroute back home, loaded with villains, and under the direction of the Molecule Man. "In the first issue of the new series," Shooter informed me, "the story starts in that suburb. Which has arrived back and is obviously intact." As in the first series, there'll be a few new characters introduced and, "I think you're going to see a lot of the familiar ones."

Shooter was also anxious to downplay the effect on the Marvel Universe of the first series. "A lot of people," he said, "misunderstood the focus. I guess they all decided that this is where we were going to change the entire Marvel Universe or kill everybody off or something. Nothing could've been further from the truth. It wasn't intended to rewrite Marvel, it was just intended to be a good story. You can't have a good story, far as I'm concerned,

AT THAT MOMENT THUNDERER OF ALL ANGELS AT THE MASSIVE FIGHTING CLUBS DOOMSDAY...
"YEAH, LIFE WAS PRETTY TYPICALLY BEFORE THE ATOMIC ACCIDENT— I WAS A CHAMPION FAIRLY ABSOLUTE MASTERY OF ALL MUSCLES!"
"YES! I— YOU'RE OUR FOOD BOY! I WISH I'D BEEN THERE TO HELP YOU!"
"YEAH, AFTER I BUSTED A COUPLE OF SUBWAY WINDOWS, THEY GAVE ME A VOUCHER TO SLOW ME DOWN! BUT I JUST TURNED AROUND AND USED IT ON 'EM!"
"HUH? IS A BEYONDER BALL!"
"FOR 2 JUMBO BARS FUN OF ME AND MONEY! I DID THAT A LOT ABOUT THE CHUMP-FIGHTING MONEY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL!"
"HEY, HERE COMES THE MILLIONTH MAN! IT'S CONAN! CONAN AND DARKNESS!"
MOOO-OOO!
"OH! THERE'S SOME BOY TO PUNCH OUT! I'M GLAD I'M NOT ONE OF OUR FOLLOWERS!"
"OK! LET'S GET AWAY FROM HERE, MARSHA!"
"WHY THOSE— THOSE WORMS!"
"ONE MORE SOUND AND I'LL SPLIT YOUR SKULL OPEN AND EAT THE BRAINS THAT WERE INSIDE!"
"WE'RE NOT HERE! CHOMP! ME CHOMP!"
"RIGHT!"
"WHO HAD THE IDEA, ANYWAY, THIS SPOOF?"
"WAS WHAT ABOUT IT?"
"I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT ABOUT IT!"

unless the characters have some development."

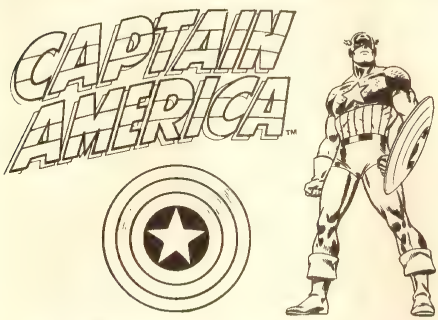
...AND THE MERCHANDISE

Shooter states positively that, "This is the last sequel. This is it." He adds, "This was planned from the beginning to work out this way." **Secret Wars** buffs need not despair, though. Merchandising continues to proliferate — everything from toys to bath towels, although Shooter tells me he's not sure if there'll ever be a Beyonder lunchbox. More interestingly, "There's been discussion about packaging **Secret Wars** in computer-enhanced video tapes. And we've had development deals to do it Saturday mornings on television." Furthermore, Shooter says, "We've had most recently an offer to repackage the whole thing, maybe recolor it, and do it as a trade paperback."

Shooter's feelings about the success of the first **Secret Wars** series are summed up by his saying, "It's real flattering. I'm glad." And he's looking forward to more satisfactions from the sequel. the occassional potshots taken at his magnum opus in the more acerbic journals—having one of his statements about **Secret Wars** II printed under the heading "Quotes That Will Live In Infamy," for instance — don't faze Shooter. "I've had my share of criticism," he says, laughing. "It's like you sort of feel you've arrived when that happens."

HEROES

BY JAMES VAN HISE



He was at the forefront of the Golden Age of comics and in 1964 he would be revived to lead the Avengers at the forefront of the Marvel Age of comics. He is the sentinel of liberty—Captain America!

Created by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, the first issue exploded on the newsstands in December, 1940 (with a cover date of March 1941). Although a year before America declared war on the Axis powers, Captain America was already fighting the war for us, serving as the point man as he slugged it out with Hitler himself on the covers of both the first and second issues. Why rely on fantastic imaginary villains when there were fantastic **real** villains abroad?

In the first origin story, the secret super-soldier serum created by Dr. Reinstein was tested successfully on Steve Rogers. But then an Axis infiltrator began shooting at everyone, destroying the serum and shooting Dr. Reinstein. The retelling of this origin in **Tales of Suspense** 63 makes it clear that Reinstein was killed and that the serum's secret died with him. No such absolute is stated in **Captain America** 1 although we assume that to be the case since no more super-soldiers followed Cap's lead.

Steve Rogers then enlists in the Army and is stationed at Camp LeHigh where he is constantly picked on by good ol' Sgt. Duffy. Ostensibly Rogers was there to root out fifth columnists—for story purposes it was just a comedy relief device.

In the first issue Cap had a triangular shield. From the second issue on this was replaced by his familiar round one. Cap actually managed to wear the shield under his clothes when appearing as Pvt. Steve Rogers.

A popular gimmick in comics of the Forties was the teenaged sidekick. In the first issue, the camp mascot Bucky Barnes accidentally discovers that Steve Rogers and Captain America are one and the same. Somehow this automatically entitles Bucky to become Cap's partner on all his most dangerous missions. The usefulness of Bucky can be seen by glancing at the covers of issues two through eleven—Bucky is being rescued by Cap on seven of them!

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF THE GOLDEN AGE

Although Jack Kirby created the character, he and Joe Simon were only with the book for the first ten issues. But the imprint they made on the character was indelible. The covers retained the same approach, as did the stories. Cap's villains continued to be weird and misshapen whether they were Nazis such as the Red Skull or just fiends in castles.

In an interview with Jack Kirby, he described the duties he and Joe Simon had on the strip as not being quite as well defined as the writer/penciller/inker designations are today. Kirby wrote and drew the strips with some art assistance from Simon, but not a large amount. Joe Simon largely served as a business manager, dealing with the companies directly since he was older and Kirby, who was under 20 at the time, would not have been taken as seriously despite his artistic talents. Simon and Kirby remained together for some fifteen years. That Simon did make some artistic contribution was evident by the vast difference in Kirby's work on **Fighting American** (a Captain America clone) in the mid-Fifties and Kirby's work on **Pvt. Strong** and **Challengers of the Unknown** just a couple of years later.

World War Two was the driving force behind Cap's success and the anvil around his neck which brought the character down when the war ended. In 1945, patriotic fervor was replaced with rebuilding and getting on with life, and the trappings of the war were happily abandoned.

An attempt was made to give Steve Rogers a civilian life as a school teacher before the magazine was transformed into **Captain America's Weird Tales** (with 74 in Oct. 1949). Cap appeared one last time and then in only one story. This conflicts with the continuity created for Cap when he was revived in 1964 and was not explained for a decade.

To answer the questions fans often raise—no, there was not a story published in the Forties wherein Bucky was killed. This was conceived in 1964 without any concern given to the fact that it conflicted with the old title that

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STRANGE TALES
FROM OUT OF THE DARKEN AGE OF HUMOR AND FUN MARVEL
CAPTAIN AMERICA
RETURNS TO CHALLENGE THE HUMAN TORCH!
IMPOSSIBLE THOUGH IT SEEMS ONE OF THE MOST FABULOUS SUPER-HEROES OF THE PAST IS NOW AN ENEMY!
SEE THE TORCH SOAR TO NEW HEIGHTS OF BREATHLESS!!
114
NOW
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YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD MAN DOWN
Cap's first appearance in the Marvel Universe was in a thought balloon and on comic book covers—In Strange Tales 114 **the character in the story is an imposter.**

had died fifteen years before. It was felt that few readers would remember and notice the contradiction. The original comic continued beyond World War Two even though we were told in 1964 that Cap "died" at the end of the war. How was all this explained? Well, if you believe the revisionists, the Captain America in the comic after 1945 was not really Cap at all, but a well-intentioned imposter! But we'll return to that shortly. It is so involved and confusing that it is best that we explore another aspect of Cap first.

THE REEL CAPTAIN AMERICA

Hollywood's penchant for adapting books and characters into films, and then inexplicably changing them, is by no means a recent phenomenon. Witness Republic Films fifteen chapter 1944 serial **Captain America**. It tells the story of Grant Gardner, crusading district attorney who fights crime as Captain America. Not only is the character completely different, the costume, while similar to the comic book version, lacks the shield and hood wings. Bucky is missing. Most inexplicable of all is that even though it was filmed in late 1943, there is no patriotic tie-in to the war in Europe as there was in Republic's **Spy Smasher** just a year earlier. Rather odd for a character that wears the American flag. While containing a lot of action, this Captain America didn't even wear boots but just ordinary shoes. Dick Purcell, who played the title role, died of a heart attack on April 11, 1944, five months after completing the film and while it was still playing, a chapter a week, in movie theaters. The actor was only 38. The serial was rereleased in 1953 as **The Return of Captain America**, which perhaps inspired his brief comic book revival shortly thereafter.

In the Forties, Cap appeared in more than just his own title but served as the red, white and blue guardian in a number of other books. He appeared in **All Winners Comics** 1-21 (from 1941-6), **USA Comics** 6-17 (from 1942-5), **All Select Comics** 1-10 and again in 16 (although it was retitled **Blonde Phantom** with the 12th issue). Cap also made supporting appearances in **Young Allies** 1-20.

The post-war issues he appeared in (which we are led to believe are the other Captain America and Bucky) are the following: **Marvel Mystery Comics** 80-84 and 86-92 (from Jan. 47 to June 49); **The Human Torch** 33 (Jan. 49) in a crossover in the Sub-Mariner story and in 35 in March 49. Then it really stretches into the post-war era with **Young Men** 24-28 (1953-4) and **Men's Adventures** 27 and 28 in 1954. Cap's own title (which had ended with 75, an issue in which he didn't even appear), was briefly revived for issues 76-78 in 1954.

But who was this other Captain America?

THE OTHER CAPTAIN AMERICA

For the sake of making this less confusing we'll deal with this interim Cap now.

Comic book fans are often plagued by continuity. Some because it conflicts with what has gone before; others because trying to maintain it over hundreds of stories unnecessarily complicates things. Frank Miller solved the problem when he took over **Daredevil** in 1979 and threw out anything he found excessive. The title was never as popular either before or since.

In the case of Captain America, long-time fans who had read the character's adventures in the Fifties were shocked to learn (in **Captain America** 153-156) that when the real Cap vanished at the end of the war, another man reconstructed the super-soldier serum. The volunteer underwent surgery to look like Steve Rogers and met a Bucky lookalike whom he injected with the serum. But the Korean War ended before the new Cap would be brought into play. The government chose not to sponsor him further in battling Communists and, in fact, never really approved of him to begin with. When the imperfect serum began to affect his and the new Bucky's minds, they were captured and placed in suspended animation so that they could not harm anyone.

WHERE AM I? HOW DID I GET HERE? WHO ARE YOU?
THAT'S WHAT WE WERE ABOUT TO ASK YOU!
WHO AM I??
FOR A MOMENT, I HAD ALMOST FORGOTTEN MYSELF!
BUT I AM NOT LUCKY ENOUGH TO FORGET FOREVER!
TO KNOW I THAT I WAS ONCE THE MAN THE WORLD CALLED CAPTAIN AMERICA!

AIN'T NOTHIN' LIKE THE REAL THING
Returning to New York after battling the Hulk and Sub-Mariner on Gibraltar, the Avengers discover a man frozen in ice. Beneath his tattered clothes is the famous red, white and blue costume of Captain America.

But there was yet another interim Captain America before this one.

In **What If?** 4 ("What if the Invaders Had Stayed Together After World War Two?") it revealed unknown events which were not alternate realities. When Captain America disappeared before the end of the war, a character known as The Spirit of '76 was called on to pinch-hit for him temporarily. Bucky was replaced by a boy named Fred Davis who had been revealed to have served this task before (in **Marvel Premiere** 30).

This is continuity becoming so involved as to be too confusing to suit the purpose.

Some old fans still resent being told that the Cap they read in the Fifties was not the real thing. Part of this comes from the feeling that these are just, after all, comic books. Why worry about linking up with a continuity from twenty years back? Only a small number of fans are really concerned about such questions anyway. All most readers want is a good story which doesn't require a reference book to follow and understand.

THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN AMERICA

It only seems fitting that when Marvel brought the familiar red, white and blue costume back in **Strange Tales** 114 (nov. 1963), it was worn by an imposter. In a story drawn by Jack Kirby, Cap battled the Human Torch (of the Fantastic Four) only to be unmasked and revealed as an old foe known as The Acrobat. The story was simple, straightforward excitement and charm. For some odd reason (perhaps a giveaway that this was a phony) Cap's pants are red whereas the rest of the costume is colored correctly. This error was apparently caught and corrected on the cover as a blue overlay, giving the pants an extra dark look, can be detected.

About a year later, the enthusiasm generated by the phony Captain America (who looked real thanks to Kirby), resulted in the decision to bring the real one back. **Avengers** 4 was the historic issue that marked the thaw and return of Steve Rogers. Cap was found quick frozen in an ice floe where he had been since he was knocked out by the explosion of a flying bomb. But while Cap dropped off to cool his heels in time when he detected imminent detonation, Bucky did not fare as well. Twenty years later, Cap is found by the Avengers. A three page recap of this appears in **Captain America** 100.

As was typical at Marvel at the time, before receiving his own series Cap fought the character already appearing in the title. In T.O.S. 58 Cap fought Iron Man and then joined the book as co-feature in 59. The stories were pretty routine until 63 when the origin of Cap was presented. The issues up through 71 presented untold tales of Cap and Bucky from World War Two, possibly because they liked the tie-in they had done in **Sgt. Fury** 13. That was a book-length crossover of Sgt. Fury alongside Cap in WWII.

The WW II stories in T.O.S. 63-71 definitely had verve and imagination, but when the series returned to contemporary adventures in 72, things didn't slack off one bit.

In the flashback stories we learned who the Red Skull was and he wasted no time reappearing in the series. In 89

"PERFECT!" A TRIBUTE TO MY OWN EVIL GENIUS! HENCEFORTH, YOU SHALL BE KNOWN AS THE RED SKULL -- ANSWERABLE ONLY TO ME!
THAT MASK!" SO LIFELIKE -- SO REAL --"
ALL YOUR LIFE, YOU HAVE NURTURED HATRED WITHIN YOUR BOSOM, AND NOW YOU HAVE POWER TO GO WITH THAT HATRED!
BUT, IT IS TIME FOR YOUR FIRST TEST! I MUST SEE HOW WILLINGLY, HOW COMPLETELY YOU WILL SERVE ME!

STILL EVIL AFTER ALL THESE YEARS
The Red Skull . . . Hitler's agent, the very embodiment of Nazism.

the Red Skull had already made a couple of reappearances when he chose to try to undo Cap with a convincing robot of Bucky Barnes. For a long time Cap blamed himself for Bucky's death.

When Cap took over with 100, we were treated to book length serials and adventures involving old foes and new friends (such as the Black Panther).

When Syd Shores inked Jack Kirby's pencils on Captain America this was the return of a collaboration that dated back to 1941 when Shores inked Kirby's covers on the original run.

The series was at its height through 113. With 110, Jim Steranko began a short run (he had intended it to be longer) in which every panel was a homage to Kirby.

In 110 ("No Longer Alone") the Hulk re-enters the picture, but rendered by Steranko he was more savage even than he'd been when originally drawn by Kirby. The Hulk will no longer listen to Rick Jones. In fact, Rick is almost killed by the Hulk. Rick confronts Cap over his endless guilt about Bucky and finally teams up with him in that same role. On one level this story encapsulated all that had been wrong with the original Bucky. Rick is good but he keeps getting in the way, getting captured and interfering with Cap's plans.

In 111 Rick is captured again by Madam Hydra which leads Cap into a death trap, one from which he seemingly does not escape. This story is wrapped up in 113 due to Steranko missing the deadline for 112. The fill-in was drawn by Jack Kirby and tied into the continuity because Marvel called Jack in desperation and asked if he could do the issue in three days! He complied, but Steranko was so angry at having his continuity interrupted that he discontinued drawing the book after 113. The last story, "The Strange Death of Captain America" even featured the Avengers as pall bearers. Cap's ploy was to give himself a new secret identity. In 1981, the British arm of Marvel reprinted these three Steranko issues in a hardcover format.

When Steranko left the book, it seemed to lose direction. Rick Jones didn't hang around as it was decided that Steranko's introduction of a new sidekick just didn't work. It worked even less well when the Falcon became Cap's partner in 133 and the book changed to **Captain America and the Falcon** with 134. The Falcon was a character who was Black and anything else was an afterthought. Unlike the Black Panther, the Falcon was uninteresting. His power was that he carried a hunting falcon named Redwing (it was only much later that the Falcon learned to fly). This unfortunate combination continued for about 90 issues until 222, even though Kirby returned to the title for an extended stay in 193 through 214.

Issue 216 does not contain Captain America. Rather it reprints the story of the Human Torch meeting the phony Cap from way back in **Strange Tales** 114.

Issue 224 is a fill-in drawn by Mike Zeck which is actually part of an earlier

WOW LOOK, HELLA... A JOKE'S A JOKE... BUT LET'S NOT CARRY IT TOO FAR!
UHHH!
CLANG!
HE MUST HAVE FOUND A WAY TO ABSORB SOME OF CAP'S PROWESS AS WELL AS HIS MEMORY! THAT FELT LIKE THE KICK OF A MULE!
THIS IS NO JOKE, MISTER! I'M COMING AFTER YOU NOW AND I'LL GET YOU ONE WAY OR ANOTHER
YOU DON'T EXPECT TO HIDE FROM ME ON A ROOFTOP, DO YOU??
NO! I'M JUST TRYING TO STAY OUT OF YOUR WAY 'TIL YOU COME TO YOUR SENSES!

FIRST A FIGHT, THEN A CO-BILLING FOR CAP

Marvel characters didn't just meet and pass the time of day—not when there was a misunderstanding available to fight over.

sequence and fits into the series between issues 199 and 200.

Kirby did draw solo adventures of Cap during his return in **Captain America Annual** 3 (1976) and 4 (1977). A brand new tabloid size adventure was released in 1976 as **Captain America's Bicentennial Battles** featuring 77 pages of adventures (the first eleven of them inked by Barry Smith).

WHEN COMICS MEET REALITY

When John Byrne drew the title for several issues in 1980, he dealt with the natural thought of people wanting Captain America to run for President. Unfortunately they copped out and had Cap turn down the nomination for reasons that were convoluted at best. It was pointed out that in real life we'd have someone who wasn't Captain America as president but that ignored the fact that in real life Captain America doesn't exist at all. The idea was discarded because Marvel took their own characters too seriously. A Frank Miller fill-in recently appeared in **Marvel Fanfare** 18. The story was very good but read as if it could have just as easily been a Daredevil story.

British artist Paul Neary has done some nice work on the title lately, including a bizarre issue (301) where the Red Skull has died of a heart attack and Cap has been accelerated to his true age. He's reverted thanks to the Avengers and the Vision.

Captain America continues to forge on, through battles with continuity and writers who have him jump through spiritual as well as physical hoops. But he will always remain the one and only Captain America. The vision which created and inspired him will remain Jack Kirby's, just as Jim Steranko recognized in his three installments of the legend. Legends come and legends go, but there is only one image as clear and recognizable as Captain America's.

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN

CONVENTIONS

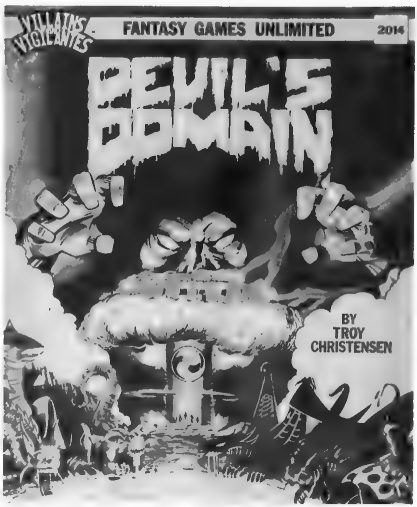
Okay, you now have a copy of **Marvel Superheroes** or **Champions** or **Villains and Vigilantes** or **Superworld** in your hands. Who are you going to play with?

Hopefully, you have a circle of friends with similar interests who are also interested in putting their own versions of superheroes into play. Sometimes this doesn't work out. If you are the only comic reader in your immediate area, where do you find people to help you act out your four-color fantasies with paper and dice?

Try going to a convention. I don't mean a comics convention, though some gamers usually hang around these, as well. Games conventions are becoming more a part of the special interest convention scene all of the time, with new ones popping up every year. Ten years ago, when I helped start DunDraCon, the longest established fantasy and science fiction gaming convention on the West Coast, there were only a couple of gaming conventions a year. This year we put on our tenth convention in ten years during the President's Day weekend just past, and there are dozens of others to choose from on the West Coast alone in the coming year.

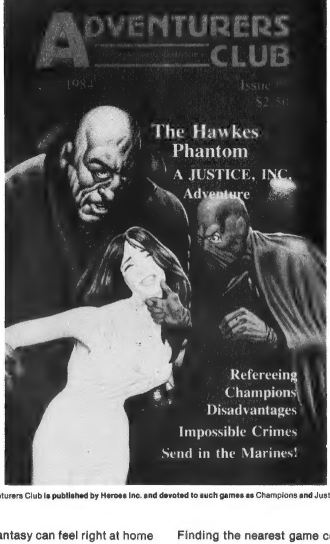
Game conventions are very different from comics and science fiction conventions because there is always something to do at a games convention. As at comics conventions, the attendees can go into the dealers room and attend seminars on their favorite subjects, but that is just icing on the cake. The main intent is to play games, and any game convention worth its admittance price has lots of opportunity for veteran gamers and people just starting into gaming to do just that.

Newcomers should stick as close as possible to the official sponsored games provided by the convention. Some conventions sponsor many tournaments using well-known game systems and often offer prizes provided by the manufacturers of the game involved. Other conventions provide individual games played purely for the fun of playing the games. Some do both. Tournaments are often fun for beginners to a game system and are a good way to meet other game players. However, the competitiveness of a tournament often does not make for good role playing and can cause new friction instead of new friendships.



Individual games are generally better for meeting other players and honing role-playing skills through the example of other players' actions. Lamentably, these examples are sometimes of things **not** to do in a role-playing game, but gaming is an activity with a lot of approaches to it, and a new gamer should be able to find some other players whose style strikes a responsive chord.

Some game conventions have more emphasis on role-playing than others. Many, such as the Origins national yearly convention, have a heavy accent on board games and large-scale battles using military miniatures. However, role-playing, and comic book superhero role-playing, is some part of any game convention. For that matter, there are many entertaining board games and miniatures rules that a new player with a taste for history, science



Adventurers Club is published by Heroes Inc. and devoted to such games as Champions and Justice, Inc.

fiction or fantasy can feel right at home with.

A convention usually sets aside a room or two for people to gather a group of players and run their own game. Some such players actively seek out new faces to play with. However, a newcomer might have trouble getting into these "open" games. Like any other special interest group, gamers have little cliques and circles of friends Some groups seem to go to a convention only to play with people they play with every week. Just look around, you'll find the people who want to play with someone new.

Finding the nearest game convention can be tricky, as many convention committees do not advertise heavily. The best thing to do is to scan the convention schedules published in **The Dragon**, TSR Games monthly role-playing magazine. Other magazines, such as **Different Worlds** from Sleuth Publications or **Space Gamer** from Steve Jackson Games, also have extensive convention lists.

DC HEROES SET BACK IN SCHEDULE

Conventions are also a good place to gather gossip and information on the gaming business. The word at the January Hobby Industry Association get-together in Dallas this year was that Mayfair's licensed **DC Heroes** game, scheduled to appear at the convention, has been delayed. I assume that many playtesters saw the same problems with the game system that I pointed out in my March column. The game went back into the shop for revision.

Since I haven't received a copy of the new manuscript (if there is a new one as I write this in February), I don't know if any of my comments in the previous column will still be valid when it finally hits the stands. We will all have to watch for developments together, and you can be sure I'll have a lot to say when it finally hits the stands.

CHAMPIONS REVISION

Speaking of revisions, the new edition of the Champions game is finally on the market, and it is a much more pleasing package than its predessor.

Using the experience gained in writing **Justice Inc.**, Steve Peterson and George MacDonald have managed to explain role-playing and the basic Champions systems well. Anyone who has been interested in playing these games but has been scared off by the complexity of the rules should have no trouble figuring them out quickly. The skill of Find Weakness was left out during the layout process and there are rules changes in how the powers of Growth and Shrinking work. These changes can be obtained from Hero Games by sending them a Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope (SASE).

The next major project from Hero Games is **Lands of Mystery**, a module intended to extend **Justice Inc.** adventures to the fabulous lost world romances of Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger or Edgar Rice Burroughs' David Innes of Pellucidar. It is a very impressive game module which succeeds in evoking the high adventure of the lost world romances. The module will have character game statistics for **Justice Inc.** and translations for Chaosium's **Call of Cthulhu**, Pacesetter's **Chill**, Fantasy Games Unlimited's

Daredevils and Blade's **Mercenaries, Spies and Private Eyes.**

Also coming from Hero in 1985 will be **Danger International**, a complete revamp of **Espionage.** The original took two years to sell out. The game suffered from uninspired cover art and a limited format which forced characters to be CIA agents. **Danger International** provides more variety in espionage and modern adventure activity and is based on the **Justice Inc.** system.

MEKTON

The recent interest in Japanese animation and giant robot toys is hitting the gaming world. **Battledroids** (which I do not have a copy of as of this writing) and **Mekton** are the first two releases.

Mekton is published by the R. Talsorian Company, a new entry into games. It is attractively presented in a flimsy box. Players can randomly generate characters using four attributes. However, only one of these attributes is of any use in manipulating the giant robots who are the primary focus of the game.

Game designer Michael Pondsmith provides an interesting if stereotypical world with a good kingdom and a bad empire. There is opportunity for role-playing but little motivation.

This is a game of giant robot battle. It is meant to be a "beer-and-pretzels" entry, where the players quickly generate their robots and go out and smash each other. Unfortunately, in an attempt to be simple, the brief rules actually leave numerous questions hanging.

HAVOC UNLEASHED

Chaosium Inc. recently issued **HAVOC**, a collection of three superhero adventures loosely connected by the supervillain group known as HAVOC. This scenario pack is unique in that it has all the necessary character information for the three major unlicensed systems, **Champions, Superworld** and **Villains and Vigilantes**, and can be played in all three systems.

There are a dozen super-opponents, statistics in all three systems for Pleistocene animals and aliens and an extremely well-described spacecraft that covers every eventuality of indiscriminate button-pushing. All this and an entire race of mutated prehistoric Indians as well. Long-time comics fan and sometimes **COMICS FEATURE** contributor Chuck Huber penned one of the scenarios, a complex slug-fest in Antarctica called "Fourth For Bridge."

Also available is **The Superworld Companion**, a compilation of new powers, skills and viewpoints on Superworld. It includes essays on how to translate **Superworld** characters to **Champions** and **Villains and Vigilantes**, plus articles on weather, a hero (or villain) base complete with Danger Room rules and elaborations of how to interpret handicaps. The cover features art by Chris Marrinan depicting heroes trying to survive in a danger room.

A NEW LOOK FOR AN OLD TIMER

In my January column, when I covered the history of superhero role-playing games, I left out **Supergame**, one of the first published. My neglect was largely due to its poor circulation and lack of representation at gaming conventions. However, the nice people at DAG Productions have sent me a package of material on the latest incarnation of the game, and it warrants serious attention.

Supergame first came out in 1980, shortly after Fantasy Games Unlimited published **Villains and Vigilantes**. Unlike V&V, **Supergame** did not have a major manufacturer behind it, and it was spottily distributed only on the West Coast. In late 1982, DAG Design (now DAG Productions) brought out a second edition with "complete rules and combat systems for any role playing situation," and "Concise, complete rule explanations entirely in plain English." To a large extent, it supplies both, but though the total package has some good points it is not satisfying to me.

The combat systems are complete but unnecessarily complex. Possession of a portable calculator is almost mandatory. There is a built-in glitch in the hand-to-hand combat rules that has apparently not been caught because of that old bugaboo of game designers everywhere: "No one would do that, so we don't have to see what would happen if someone did do that." In this case, there is no obvious reason to have a Dexterity of zero, even though the rules allow for it. However, if one or more of the combatants has a zero DEX, it is possible, though unlikely, to have a minus 50 percent chance of hitting someone. It is not explained how one roles a negative number on percentile dice!

This glitch could be fixed with very little effort and a mild prohibition. The authors use an entirely different system for ranged attacks, one which calls for extra dice rolls which slow up combat. The dice called for are six-sided rather than percentile and this is the only case in which these dice are needed. Percentile are used to determine damage done.

But this is "designer-talk"—the reaction of one game designer to another's method of operation—and the game does certainly have its good points.

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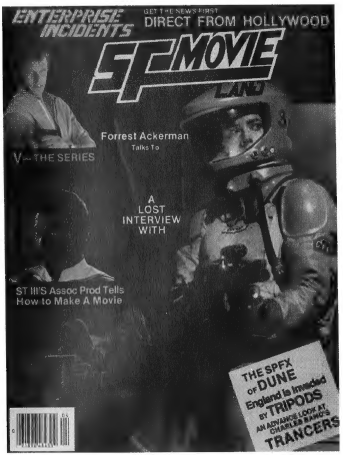
Formerly Enterprise Incidents



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